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"OH! CAPTAIN KERSON," ELFIN SAID, "I HAVE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE FOR YOU, AND THE TRAIN HAS LEFT."

## REGINALD KERSON'S SECRET.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE MANOR.

SINGLITHORPE MANOR was the principal residence in the village which bore that name. It had been in the possession of the Musgroves from generation to generation, until it at last fell into the hands of the Misses Musgrove, three maiden ladies, daughters of the late owner. The family had ever been famed for their extraordinary beauty, traces of which yet remained in the no longer youthful countenances of the former, who, notwithstanding their silver hair, were still considered as decidedly handsome.

The drawing-room in which they were now

seated, if not modernly, was elegantly furnished, and as the receding rays of an August sun fell on the rich purple of curtains and upholstery, and glanced off to the massive gilt frames of the valuable pictures, there was nothing wanting and nothing existing, which could not satisfy the most fastidious taste.

"So Edie will be here to-morrow!" said the eldest of the three ladies, as, removing her gold spectacles, she passed an open letter to her sisters.

"Poor child!" returned one of the latter, whilst perusing the same. "These second marriages seldom make home the same place to the first family, and for poor Edward's sake we will do all in our power to make her happy."

Poor Edward was an only brother who had died but one year since, leaving a young widow, who had within the last month married again, a proceeding against which her youthful daughter rebelled, as though by so doing her mother had entailed upon her the greatest misery imaginable.

"Oh, aunties, do let me live with you. I am so miserable," she wrote, and the sympathies of the ladies being wholly with their niece, whom they considered as deeply injured as she did herself by the step their sister-in-law had taken, they at once responded to her wish.

"She shall never enter the Manor whilst we live," said Eleanor, the youngest, referring to the latter, when after reading Edie's letter she returned it to the other.

"Most indecent I consider it," Matilda, the eldest, rejoined. "Edward scarcely cold in his grave before she takes another husband; but ring the bell, Sarah, for lights! I have no patience to discuss the subject."

However, notwithstanding this assertion, it was long after the curtains had been drawn, shutting out the glorious moonlight in which the grounds of Singlithorpe had become bathed, that Edward's widow, with all her sins and vanity, was fully commented upon.

"I wonder whom she resembles most!" said Eleanor, thinking of the expected niece, whom

they had neither of them seen since, as a baby of four years, she was once brought by her parents to the Manor.

"Let's see!" Matilda replied, calculating the years on her white taper fingers, "she must be fifteen."

"Fifteen! dear me. Well, it will be much better that she should be here than in London, and with such a mother, too!" and Eleanor seemed puzzled to know which was the greater danger to the young girl—the metropolis, which she looked upon as a sink of iniquity, or the society of her late brother's wife; but as the chimes of the clock struck eleven the door opened, and the servants, preceded by the butler who carried the family Bible, filed in to prayers, and the quiet day at Singlethorpe came to a close.

The following morning came in bright and glorious as the rest of that beautiful month had been, and nothing was thought of for the time being but the expected advent of Elsie, the sisters vying with each other in making everything as attractive as they could for her coming.

The choicest flowers were cut and arranged in the pretty room especially dedicated to her use, a final touch by each being given to the lace drapery of bed and windows, which the housekeeper had pronounced faultless; and then, when the hour at last arrived, when the carriage which had been sent to the station ought to return, the ears of each were strained to catch the first sound of the wheels, as they grated on the gravel drive, until at last when she did arrive Miss Matilda rushed to the hall with open arms to receive her.

"And so you are little Elsie!" she said, as the young girl alighted from the vehicle, and bounded up the steps to where her aunt stood: "I declare, quite a young woman, and you were only a tiny tottler, your head scarcely reaching the table, when I saw you last!" to which Elsie replied with a rippling laugh, as disengaging herself from the other's embrace she turned to where her other aunts awaited her.

"A true Musgrove!" Miss Eleanor said, proudly, whilst her eyes rested admiringly on the fair face and form of her youthful niece, who, in truth, had inherited the family comeliness.

"Oh! you dear, dear aunties," she said, after returning the caresses bestowed on her, "is it not delightful here?" and her dark velvet eyes roamed from the cool shade of the elegant apartment to where, without, the sun cast his golden rays over the fresh green of the emerald grass, and then stooping down she almost hugged Gip, the little terrier, to death, who had already put her nose into her hands as much as to say—we shall be friends, I know.

"Haden't you a hot, wearisome journey!" the ladies asked, when, a few moments later Elsie returned disrobed of her travelling attire, looking prettier than ever, with her hat removed from the black, glossy hair, a slight flush on her olive cheek, and her teeth like pearls displaying themselves from between her coral lips.

"Well, no," she answered, the colour deepening on her face; "that is to say, the latter part was not, for after I had tried in vain to become interested in the dullest of novels, and had been almost made a convert by one of the Salvation Army, a gentleman entered the carriage. Well, of course, the weather paved the way to conversation, and so delightful a companion did he prove himself that I soon shut up my book. The Hallelujah young lady did the same with her eyes, and we chatted, he and I, on until the train arrived at Singlethorpe."

"And there, of course, you parted!" Miss Eleanor said, with a smile.

"Oh! not at all," the girl laughed, "for who do you think he is? He knows you quite well."

"Give us a description," the aunts replied, "and if he lives in or near here, doubtless we shall soon discover who he is."

But a knock and ring at the hall door stopped the description which Elsie had already commenced, and her large eyes opened in wonderment when Captain Kerson, her fellow-traveller, was announced.

He was between thirty and thirty-five years of age, tall and well-built, looking even older, from a settled shade of melancholy pervading his features, as though some past sorrow had left its indelible mark upon his countenance, which, strive as he would to forget, would ever be present with him, whilst this very sadness gave an irresistible charm to his manner.

"Good evening, ladies!" he said, returning their cordial greeting. "I trust you will excuse my intruding on you at this time, but I felt rather anxious to know that my little travelling companion had arrived safe."

And then he held out his hand to Elsie, who, blushing and confused, had taken refuge behind Miss Musgrove's chair.

"I am sure you are very kind, Reginald," that lady replied, "my niece was just telling us about you," and then the conversation drifted into ordinary topics, until the growing shades of twilight warned their visitor that it was time to say adieu.

"Isn't he delightful, auntie!" said Elsie, when the door closed on the latter. And she would have indulged in further ecstasies in praise of the same had not something in the face of Miss Musgrove stayed the words on her lips, whilst "that Captain Kerson was a gentleman," was all she could elicit from either of the maiden sisters.

Feeling sure that she must be fatigued after her journey, it was yet early when Elsie was led to the pretty room assigned her, where shortly after, with her glossy curls resting on the snowy pillow, she wondered in her mind why her aunts were so reticent with regard to the Captain, and then fell asleep to dream that she was on the brink of a precipice, when a strong arm saved her from a dreadful death, and when she opened her eyes to look into the face of her preserver it was the face of Reginald Kerson.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DAWN OF LOVE.

"I FEAR, my child, you will find it very dull here with three old maids for companions," Miss Matilda said, when the next morning Elsie descended to breakfast, looking fresh and fair as an opening bud, whilst she cheerfully returned her aunt's greeting: "but Eleanor will show you over the grounds before lunch, and that will be something new after town life; and there is a pretty lake on the west side, possession of which you can dispute in future with the swans, who, up to now, have reigned supreme on its surface."

"Dull!" repeated the girl. "I am sure I shall never be that, auntie dear," and, indeed, Elsie never did seem to tire of the life which followed at the Manor.

As a sunbeam she seemed to have entered within the walls of the old house, entwining herself around the hearts of her relatives, each day developing more fully that beauty for which the Musgroves had ever been famous; whilst the ladies themselves she but brought to their remembrance the face of the dead brother they had so fondly loved, as they lavished on his child all the affection which had once been his, and Elsie knew no greater happiness than in the warm summer days to roam unchecked amid the slopes and valleys surrounding the Manor, with Gip for her companion, or to lazily float o'er the surface of the lake in the little boat, assigned to her especial use.

It was in these wanderings that she was oftentimes accompanied by Reginald Kerson. At first by accident they met, in the yellow autumn, until the walks became so frequent, and each little dreamt of the danger into which they were drifting, as they trod the dead leaves beneath their feet, until too late they were rudely awakened to the knowledge that their hopes were as lifeless as they.

"Do come in and see Aunt Matilda," said Elsie, as three months later they had returned from one of these walks; "she seems so ill."

And on his acquiescing—

"Auntie dear, Captain Kerson has come to see you," the girl added, when opening the door of

the drawing-room a few moments later she bade him enter.

Miss Musgrove was seated by the fire, looking very pale and worn, a faint smile of pleasure passing over her countenance when Elsie approached her.

"I am so sorry to see you so ill," Captain Kerson said, advancing.

"Yes, I am ill," replied the lady; "but I suppose Elsie told you I intend leaving Singlethorpe for the winter, purposing to pass the same at Ilfracombe; and don't you think the change will be good for her too? It is so cold here; besides"—after a pause—"I could not spare my darling," she added, and the thin aged hand passed caressingly over her glossy curls.

"Perhaps so," the Captain replied, thinking the while how ill he could spare Elsie either, and his sad eyes wandered to her fair face; but it was only a moment that his eyes met hers, and then he fully entered with the other sisters into the arrangements made for Miss Musgrove's journey, when a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

"You know I am an idle man," he said, addressing the latter, "and I should feel it a pleasure if you will allow me to accompany you to the south. I may be useful, you know, seeing to your luggage, &c., for I am sure you will require the exclusive services of your maid."

"You are indeed kind, Reginald," the ladies chimed in; "we cannot thank you enough." And Miss Musgrove, gladly availing herself of his offer, it was finally arranged that he was to be of the party to the end of their journey.

The doctor had urged that no time should be lost in leaving Singlethorpe, he considering it the only thing likely to save the life of his patient, so that scarcely a week elapsed before everything was in preparation for their departure.

It was a cold bleak day when the carriage drove up which was to carry them to the station; but notwithstanding the east wind which was blowing, and her sister's entreaty to postpone the undertaking, Miss Musgrove declined to alter her arrangements.

"It would be putting everybody out," she said, so gave her orders that there should be plenty of fur rugs and wraps provided for their accommodation, and followed by Elsie, after an affectionate farewell to her sisters, they said good-bye to the Manor.

Captain Kerson was awaiting them at the station, and but a short time intervened before they were on their way to the metropolis, where they were to pass the night.

Notwithstanding the cold, and the fatigue attendant on the journey, Miss Musgrove was better than could have been expected, and was not only able but quite anxious to start for Devonshire the following morning.

"Stay here," Captain Kerson said, whilst he saw that they were comfortably ensconced by the large fire which was burning in the first-class waiting-room, "and I will procure a carriage to ourselves," and he tenderly pressed Elsie's hand, telling her he would not be long.

"What a time he is!" the latter said at last, when, on looking at the clock which hung over the chimney-piece, she found it wanted but a few minutes to the time they were to start, and no Reginald, when, losing all patience at the first bell sounded, she told Langdon, the maid, to stay with her aunt, and she would go to ascertain the cause.

Passengers were hurrying forward to secure their different places, whilst porters were wheeling trollies laden with luggage, and the engine snorting as though in impatience to be off, but still no sign of the Captain—until, with a last shrill shriek, the ponderous wheels moved over the metals, and, as a thing of life, it went forward, and the train left the station.

To return to where her aunt, with Langdon, awaited her was all that Elsie could do, after inquiring when the next train would start.

"Not for another two hours," the man answered; and sick at heart, she was about to return to the waiting-room.

"Two hours!" she mentally ejaculated. "What shall I do?" And the tears started to her eyes as a hundred fears suggested themselves



to her imagination, when, suddenly turning by a bookstall, she came face to face with the subject of her thoughts.

"Oh! Captain Kerson," she said, "I was so frightened. I have been looking everywhere for you, and the train has left."

"I am so sorry," he said, offering her his arm; but his face was deadly pale, and the agitation under which he was labouring he could ill conceal, as he led her to her aunt.

Fortunately that lady had fallen into a peaceful slumber amid the cushions which Langdon had arranged for her comfort—the reason which was given her on her awaking, that they had missed the train.

But although when, after the stated time, they entered the next, the young officer vainly endeavoured to recover his usual spirits, Elsie was alone aware that something dreadful must have occurred, whilst her youthful heart went out in sympathy with his.

"You won't be very vexed that I cannot, as I had at first intended, remain with you longer than to see you comfortably located at your hotel!" he asked of Miss Musgrove, who, after her sleep, seemed fully to enjoy the prospect of her journey.

"Why!" she answered. "Is it imperative, Reginald, that you should return?"

She always called him Reginald, for they had been such old friends; and so mixed up had he been in her life that Miss Musgrove had learned to look on him more in the light of a nephew. And now it was more for Elsie's sake than her own that she regretted this change in his plans.

She had noticed with a glad heart the feeling of attachment which had grown up between the two, of which they were scarcely themselves aware, little dreaming of the cruel fate which would shatter their hopes and teach them a love they dare not cherish.

"Circumstances over which I have no control have occurred which oblige me to forego a pleasure to which I had looked forward with delight!" and as he spoke his eyes wandered to the corner where Elsie sat, her eyes seemingly fixed on the pages of the novel which they had purchased at the railway bookstall; and his heart sank within him when he saw, when once she raised them to his, that a sudden expression of sadness came over her features.

But it was only a moment; and then, as if all were schooling themselves to meet the inevitable, they admired the country through which they were passing; they spoke of the weather—everything but the subject most in their thoughts.

It was late when they at last arrived at their destination, but the invalid bore the fatigue of the journey much better than they expected; and had Reginald been her son he could not more have studied her comfort during the few hours he could remain.

Elsie could not avoid noticing the look of anxiety he cast around him, when they first alighted from the carriage, and the excited restlessness he evinced until they were seated in the conveyance which was to take them to the Sea View Hotel, not until they were in their own private room recovering his self-possession.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BEAUTIFUL STRANGER.

"GOOD-BYE," he said, the next morning, when he was about to return to London by an early train, whilst pressing Elsie's hand, and looking with those sad eyes of his into hers; "take care of your aunt;" and, after a moment's pause, "sometimes think of me."

They were alone in the pretty room, with its bay window looking out on the fathomless ocean. Although November, the air was soft and balmy as June, and, entering in at the open frame, tossed the black glossy curls from the girl's fair forehead.

He was very near her, so near that she could feel his tawny moustache touch her cheek, and the warmth of his breath as he raised his hand to the rebellious hair, and then, lifting her head,

she read the secret in the love-glance which met her own.

She knew how this parting was telling him the truth against which he had battled so long, how dear she had become to him in those glad summer days at Singlethorpe Manor; but when her heart beat with tumultuous joy, and she would have leant on his bosom in the first delight of her new-born happiness, after one passionate embrace, in which he pressed kisses of fire on her lips, already wreathed with the smiles of love, he almost pushed her from him, and then left her—left her with nothing but that love-dream to haunt her in the days which followed, when, with her aunt—her sole companion—she would hour by hour watch the restless sea, whilst the waves tossed and foamed at her feet.

"Captain Kerson is a strange man, auntie," she said one day, whilst walking beside the invalid chair, in which the latter was seated; "he has never written since we came to Devonshire, and he went away so suddenly, too!"

"Yes," Miss Musgrove answered, looking keenly at her niece; but Elsie was studiously contemplating the ground they were treading, never raising her head, whilst she continued,—

"He always seems to me like some one who has known a great trouble."

"Poor Reginald! he has known trouble; but there is a skeleton in every house, Elsie," was the rejoinder.

And then Miss Musgrove gave directions that she should be wheeled to her hotel, for the air was growing keen.

"You might be more careful," the former heard some one say.

She had only left her aunt's chair a moment, to look at some trifle in a shop-window, when the words fell on her ears. They were in a woman's voice, and when Elsie hastened to see what was the matter, she found that, in turning, the man had accidentally caught the hem of a lady's dress under the wheel.

She was a tall, fair woman, of about twenty-five or six, with large blue eyes looking out from beneath a cluster of auburn curls, which completely shaded her forehead; but the rose tint on her white skin deepened to a carnation hue when, in turning sharply to remonstrate with the former, she encountered the gaze of Miss Musgrove.

"Good heavens!" she was heard to ejaculate, under her breath; and then she hastily moved on with her companion, a middle-aged man, of military bearing.

"What a horrid woman! and how she did look at you, auntie," Elsie said. "Do you know her?"

"No, dear," was the reply; "but I knew some one once so like her that, did I not know she was dead, I should have believed it was the same; but she was a bad woman, Elsie, and yet I loved her dearly once; but I shall be glad to get back, dear, I am so cold."

There were some letters awaiting them, on their return from Singlethorpe, in which the sisters hoped they were deriving benefit from the change.

"It was very cold and bleak at the Manor," they wrote, "and the woods looked sad, with the dead leaves covering the ground. Reginald Kerson had called many times to hear if there were any news, but he seemed so ill that they had recommended he ought to have a change himself, but he would not hear of it;" and then, with love and kisses to dear Elsie, whose glad voice they said they missed so much, they brought the same to a close.

The next day Miss Musgrove was too ill to take her accustomed airing, she had caught a chill, and so Elsie had to go by herself; but she soon grew weary, and her thoughts became sad as they returned to that last parting with Captain Kerson.

"I am sure there is something sad in his history, and auntie knows it," she ruminated, when, with the full intention of that night begging the latter to tell her what it was, she turned her steps homewards, when, some one gently touching her on the shoulder, she gave a start, to find Reginald himself by her side.

"You here, Captain Kerson!" she exclaimed. "How you frightened me! Have you seen auntie? And when did you come down?"

The questions came all in a breath, whilst the colour came and went beneath her olive skin, until it at last left her pale as marble.

"I have been to the hotel, Elsie," he replied, "and Miss Musgrove telling me I should find you here, I came. Are you not glad to see me?"

"I am so glad," she faltered, and was about to take the arm he had offered, when a laugh from behind attracted their attention, and, simultaneously turning, Elsie saw it had proceeded from the lips of the woman they had met the previous evening.

She was with the same companion as on the former occasion, but further than a stare on the part of both they passed on, and when Elsie moved to again take the Captain's arm, she thought it strange how stern and grief-stricken he had suddenly become.

No allusion was made to the rencontre by either when they returned to the hotel; and, indeed, Miss Musgrove's cold had taken such a serious turn that they both became anxious—an anxiety which in the morning proved not to be without foundation.

"No, don't write to Sarah and Eleanor," she said, in answer to the entreaties of both the Captain and Elsie that they should be communicated with, "it would only frighten them; and doubtless, with care, I shall soon be as well as usual."

But notwithstanding all the care and attention she received, Miss Musgrove became gradually worse, until it was imperative that a telegram should be sent to Singlethorpe without delay; and Reginald, with Elsie, forgot, for the time being, aught else but the grave symptoms which surrounded the fate of their beloved friend.

It was only while awaiting the sisters' arrival that they would, at the desire of the invalid, go out for an hour to restore, as she said, the roses to her darling's face, feeling she was perfectly safe in the keeping of the officer; but after the first day of his coming they never again encountered the beautiful woman whose presence appeared to have such a strange effect on the latter.

## CHAPTER IV.

### NO HOPE.

Two days necessarily elapsed before the Misses Musgrove could arrive from Singlethorpe, during which, with the exception of that two hours' ramble by the seashore, Reginald and Elsie were intermittent in their watch by the sick bed, and a gleam of pleasure would pass over the countenance of the invalid, as she alternately gazed from one to the other.

"I shall never see the Manor again," she said when, on the eve of the second day, they sat in the sick-room awaiting the coming of the ladies from Singlethorpe—Elsie with her hand clasped within that of her aunt, whilst Captain Kerson occupied a seat on the other side of the bed.

It had turned very cold and dreary after the lovely weather of the preceding week, and there was a melancholy in the roar of the waves, which, as the moan of an unquiet spirit, would enter within that silent room, illuminated but by the glow from the fire, which cast fantastic shapes around, thus adding to the weirdness of the surroundings.

"I shall never see the Manor again," Miss Musgrove repeated, "and there is something I want much to say to you, Reginald, before the end comes."

"Don't talk like that, dear Miss Musgrove," the latter replied. "You are ill and weak now, but there is no reason that you should not recover."

"A vain hope, a vain hope," she returned; "but so that I leave my darling happy, I have no wish to stay," and she turned to where Elsie, with the tears starting to her eyes, knelt beside her, when again looking towards the Captain, "I had hoped, Reginald," she said—"may I not hope still?"

But Reginald Kerson could do no more than

press the thin, wrinkled hand, a shade of sorrow passing over his features, while the words he would have uttered remain unsaid, as the door opening, the sisters entered.

They bore traces of the fatigue and anxiety they had experienced in their long journey, on which they had started immediately on receipt of the telegram; but no persuasion could prevail on them to take either rest or refreshment until they had been led to the bedside of the sufferer, when after each having kissed the young girl, who rose to throw her arms round their necks, they told her and Reginald Kerson to go and get a breath of fresh air, whilst they would remain with the invalid.

During the week which followed there was little change, but the end came when least expected, when after days, in which the latter appeared to know no pain, the sands of life gradually running out peacefully to the last, they were all summoned to the bed of death.

Miss Musgrove had just awoke from a quiet sleep, the last one she would know, until the cold grave closed her from the world. The doctor had told them all it was useless to hide the truth, that she was sinking fast, so fast that he considered it doubtful if she would ever see another sun.

"Don't grieve, my darling!" she said, whilst her hand passed lovingly over the bright glossy curls.

She could no longer see, and Elsie sobbed out her sorrow with her face buried in the coverlet.

"Don't grieve, my pain will soon be over, and I am an old woman, glad to go; and Heaven grant, darling, that you wish all your life before you, may be as happy as I have been in mine! Where is Reginald?" she asked. "I can't see, and there is something I would say before I go. Bend low," she said, faintly, as the latter approached, and then, with his ear placed close to her lips, she whispered to him what was in her heart; but to those who surrounded the bed the words were inaudible, whilst when Reginald raised his head it was fled that those eyes, from which the light had fled for ever, were unconscious of the look of agony which then passed over his features—features from which all the youth had fled, leaving his face drawn and lined like that of an old man.

Without a word, he approached to where Elsie still sobbed out her grief. She had kissed for the last time the lips of the dying woman, whose breath became shorter and shorter, the sisters alone pressing closer as the end came near.

"Come along, Elsie," he said to the weeping girl, "it was her wish, darling," and he pointed to where, with her eyes already fixed in death, her aunt gasped out the last breath of life, and then all was still.

"Oh! Captain Kerson, it was my fault. I kept her out too long that night when she caught the cold which has killed her!" and Elsie cried as though her heart would break.

"Don't be silly," Captain Kerson answered. "It was through no fault of yours, my darling. There was no hope for her before she left Singlethorpe, although the stay here has prolonged her days," and leading her to a seat by the fire, he bade her to be seated.

"You will be making yourself ill next," he said, tenderly.

And when Elsie raised her tear-stained face to his, there was that in the expression of his countenance she could not mistake, and the colour flushed beneath her olive skin, dyeing cheeks and forehead with carnation hue, and she knew too well that her young heart had gone out to that man, who loved her as he had never loved before.

"Elsie, my darling—my darling!" he said, and passing his hand over her sunny head, as the dead woman upstairs had done but a few moments before, he gazed on her for a second; then with a sudden impulse he threw himself at her feet, drawing her nearer—nearer until their lips met, and he whispered in her ear the love he could no longer conceal.

The next moment he started, as on the door opening to admit the sisters, who, now that all was over, had descended from the chamber of

death, the sound of a woman's voice fell on his ear.

It was someone on the landing, upon which their rooms opened, making inquiries respecting apartments; but it was enough to cause the colour to forsake the face of the young officer, as with one look at Elsie, who had risen from her seat when her aunts entered, he sank into a chair, with a strong effort controlling the emotion under which he was evidently suffering.

"It is all over, poor dear!" Miss Sarah said, alluding to her dead sister, whilst Eleanor could not speak for the grief which overwhelmed her, which Elsie alone seemed to have the power to assuage.

"Don't auntie, dear—don't!" she said, soothingly, as sob on sob broke from the elder woman's breast, until at last she became quieter in her great sorrow.

"We should wish the body removed as soon as practicable, Reginald," Miss Sarah continued, "for I could not think of her being buried anywhere but in the family vault."

"I will see to all that for you!" was the reply; "and, indeed, Captain Kerson was only too glad to have something which would draw his mind from brooding over troubles which unkind fate had woven around him. The more he was with Elsie the greater became the temptation to cast aside the scruples which, until now, had stood in the way of his happiness; and he determined, in his mind, when once Miss Musgrove had been placed in the vault of her ancestors, that he would carry out her last wish, and as these thoughts passed through his mind the gloom which late events had cast over him as quickly disappeared.

He no longer refrained from telling Elsie of the love without which she had made him to feel life was not worth living; but of the past he had not, as yet, the courage to speak to her, whilst she alone, egoist of the fact that his love was more to her than aught else, lived on in the knowledge of that happiness, which was her life, her all.

## CHAPTER V.

### A STRANGE SURPRISE.

As Captain Kerson promised, he had arranged all for the removal of the corpse to Singlethorpe, to where a telegram had been despatched, followed by a letter giving full instructions when and how she would arrive, whilst the family would be there by a later train, and then for the last time he and Elsie took a stroll by the seashore.

It was a sad ending to the trip towards which but a short time since she had looked forward with such delight; but youth quickly outlives sorrow, and with this new-born happiness Elsie had almost ceased to remember the loss which had come to her.

"Would you grieve much, Elsie, should anything come between us?"

It was Captain Kerson who asked the question, and raising her eyes to his, he could see them become filled with tears at the thoughts the words suggested; but they soon passed away, for did she not feel his warm breath on her face, as in low tones, mingling with the murmur of the ocean, he told her how dear she was to him, and that how without her life would not be worth living?

"No woman has ever been to me what you are, Elsie," he said; "you believe me, don't you, darling?"

And Elsie did believe him, and would have done so in spite of any proof to the contrary; but what was it that her dead aunt meant about the skeleton in every house, when she had asked her what made him seem so sad? And Elsie felt she could not refrain from asking him of the sorrow in his past, but the words she would have uttered died on her lips. It would seem like doubting him, she thought. No, she would ask nothing; whatever he had to tell that she should know should come spontaneously from himself.

The sisters were waiting them on their return, it was growing late, and too cold for

Elsie to be out; besides, she would have to be up early in the morning, they said, so after a few moments the latter bade them good-night, leaving Reginald looking over the time-table, studying the trains for the next day.

"Have you seen that woman, Reginald?" Miss Sarah asked when the door closed on Elsie. "She is positively here, in the same hotel," and the former looked as though it was astonishing that the roof which covered both had not fallen in on either.

Captain Kerson was perfectly aware who was meant by that woman, so asked no more than that Miss Musgrove was certain such was the case.

"Certainly of course I am," that lady replied, forgetting for the time being, aught else. "Why, my dress actually brushed against hers on the stairs," and she shook her skirts to get rid of any contamination she might have derived in the contact; "so even in that you see they have deceived you."

"Did my poor sister know of this?" Eleanor asked, looking pityingly on the young officer, whose worst fears had thus become realised.

"I don't think so," was the reply. And then he told them of the dead woman's last wish and his own shattered hopes.

"I must leave it with Elsie and your own sense of honour, Captain Kerson," Miss Sarah said, after a pause; "but she must know all, remember, all!"

"I never intended that it should be otherwise, Miss Musgrove," was the reply. "Even had the report brought to me been true, Elsie should have known everything before she linked her fate with mine."

"I know we can trust you, Reginald," the former replied, grasping his extended hand and smilingly looking into his face, all the old confidence restored; and adding a last good-night, he turned with a sad heart to leave the room, when the door was opened gently from without, and Elsie herself stood before them.

She had on a loose peignoir, her long black hair falling as a veil over her shoulders; her face was white as marble, and the lamp she carried trembled in her grasp.

"Come upstairs, auntie," she said, hurriedly; "come quick." And, without waiting to notice the effect her words had on the officer, or even to acknowledge his presence, she retraced her steps, followed by Sarah, who told the others to stay until her return.

Hastily they ascended the stairs. It was but a short flight, leading on to the corridor, on which the doors of their rooms opened.

Without a word, invoking silence to her aunt, who followed on, she gently opened the one belonging to the chamber where the body of Miss Musgrove remained, awaiting its early removal in the morning.

The coffin was placed on low trestles at the further end of the apartment, the latter being redolent with the scent of flowers, which loving hands had placed on and about the same, whilst a single wax candle cast a weird light over all, creating a deeper gloom around the corners it could not penetrate.

A sound of some one crying bitterly fell on their ears, and, pushing the door noiselessly open, Sarah could not suppress a start on seeing a figure bending over the dead form of her sister, whilst a woman's voice sobbed forth its grief.

She had removed the covering from the dead and lifeless face, on which she impressed passionate kisses, unconscious of another's presence, until Miss Sarah's voice fell on her ears; then with a start she raised her head, dashing aside all traces of her recent emotion.

"A thousand pardons!" she said; "I mistook the room;" and then without another word, she passed by aunt and niece, the former unable to find her voice, whilst she looked almost dead as she gazed on the lovely face before her, Elsie trembling the while, recognising in the intruder the woman she had seen on the beach.

"Why did she come here, aunt?" she asked. "I am sure she knows you and poor auntie." And then she told Miss Sarah of their former meeting.



"You, dear," the latter replied, "there was a time when we loved her fondly; but it is a long story, Elsie, and the hour is late. But how came you to find her here?"

"I felt I could not go to bed until I had taken one last look at dear auntie," was the response, "and was about to enter this room for that purpose, when I heard some one crying over the coffin. It frightened me so much; the more so that I could only see a figure bending and weeping in great grief, and no more. But do tell me all about her."

"I will, dearest," was the rejoinder; "but not now. You must retire, for you know we have to be up early in the morning."

So, after again placing the cover over the face they loved so well, Elsie was led by her aunt from the chamber of death to the little room, where, with her head resting on the snowy pillow, she was soon asleep.

Eleanor and the Captain were anxiously awaiting the elder lady's return.

"Poor girl," said the former, when Miss Sarah had related what had occurred. "Thank Heaven there is some good left in her yet! It seems as if it were the hand of Providence which led her to take up her residence at the same hotel. Didn't she say anything else?"

"Not a word," Eleanor replied, "merely something about having mistaken the room, and then she passed out to her own."

"And, of course, Elsie knows?" Captain Kerson asked.

"At present nothing; though, naturally, her curiosity is excited," was the answer Eleanor gave, as, saying they were all tired, she told him he must go or they would all be ill.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

It was early on the next morning when the sisters were awake, the undertaker coming punctually to the hour stated to screw down the lid of the coffin, and thus close for ever from their sight the beloved dead! It was agreed between them that Elsie should not be disturbed till later on, and the sun was shining brightly when the latter opened her eyes, to find the others already awaiting her.

"Why didn't you let me be called before, auntie!" she asked, when entering their private sitting-room, she discovered that they had long breakfasted, a fresh supply of ham and eggs being ordered on her making her appearance.

"My dear, there is plenty of time," they replied, returning the kiss she gave; "as we don't go until the midday train, and I was sure you were tired."

Captain Kerson's name was not mentioned, although Elsie longed to know if he had been there yet, anxiously watching every opening of the door, in the hope that he would enter; but at last the well-known footstep fell on her ear, and Reginald shortly after entered the room.

He looked jaded and worn, his eyelids heavy and swollen from the effects of sleeplessness, but there was a sad tenderness in his tone when, after having shaken hands with the elder ladies, he advanced to her side.

"The train starts at 12 30; will you be ready?" he asked. "I have ordered a carriage to be here a little after the hour, so that we shall not be hurried."

The words were addressed to all, but his eyes were watching every glance, every movement of the girl's face, whilst pressing the hand she had held out to him.

"I will meet you at the station, Miss Musgrove," he said; "you won't mind, will you?"

"No, decidedly not," she answered, knowing full well why it was he would not go with them from the hotel; and so, after a short time, saying he wanted to make one or two purchases previous to starting, he bade them adieu, as he said, for the present.

The carriage at the appointed time drove up, and it was not long before Elsie and her aunts took their seats in the same.

They had seen no more of the strange woman previous to their departure, and in the bustle attendant on their leaving, all thoughts of her appeared to have passed from their minds.

Captain Kerson was on the platform awaiting their arrival. He had seen to everything for their comfort, even to procuring the tickets.

"It is now twenty-five minutes past, and the train is timed for the half-hour, so you may as well take your seats," he said, offering his arm to Miss Musgrove, Elsie and Eleanor following to where a carriage, with "engaged" on the window, had been secured for them; and then he brought out a book, a daily paper, and one or two others, to beguile the time during the long journey.

"They are not very punctual," he said, after having seen that the ladies were comfortable.

He stayed by the door awaiting the signal for them to start, but the half-hour, five minutes, and another five after that went by, and, as yet, no sign of leaving, until, growing impatient of the delay, Reginald advanced to the first porter he could see.

"I thought this train was to start at half-past twelve?" he said; "and here it is a quarter to one, and no sign of moving. I wonder there are not more accidents on this line. It is shameful!"

"They are a-waitin' for the express," the man answered, not forgetting to attach an "h"; "but here she be!"

And as he spoke the express dashed into the station, and Reginald had but just time to jump into his compartment when, with a shriek and a puff, they moved from the same.

Their conversation was but limited, owing to the noise made by their own and passing trains, and, apparently, each had more or less become absorbed in their reading; but even that, by the jolting of the carriages, became almost impossible, and it was not long before the elder ladies fell into a doze.

Elsie was seated close to her lover, with whom she conversed in low tones, until, at length, she also becoming drowsy, leant her head on his broad shoulder, where, after a few moments, she fell into a peaceful slumber.

How long they had so remained they could not say. Reginald alone was awake, watching, as in a dream, the fields, and, at times, the chalk banks, which, with the little country stations, appeared to fly from them, whilst they flew on faster, faster, with now and then a shrill whistle, like a scream of delight, sounding from the thing which bore them on, when another train, with its freight of human life, would dash wildly by, and again, unheeding all but the time thus gained, on, on, whilst labourers would for a moment rest from their work to gaze on the line of black which came and went as they could realise the fact. And then, a roar, a crash, and chaos, the shrieks of the living, the moans of the dying mingling with the last scream of the engine, when rolling on its mighty side it went, dragging with it the carriages, which, broken and shattered, buried, beneath their weight their helpless victims.

The Misses Musgrove knew nothing of their danger until they awoke, rudely tossed on the floor of the compartment they occupied, a severe shaking the only injury they had received; whilst Elsie, whom fright had momentarily deprived of consciousness, lay white, and apparently lifeless in the arms of the Captain.

To assist them all from the broken debris was the first care of the latter, when, gently laying the fainting girl on a bank, with a prayer of thankfulness to the Almighty for having saved their lives in the midst of death, he left her in the charge of her aunts, whilst he went to render what assistance he could to the remainder.

Fortunately, a doctor who was travelling in the same train, had escaped unhurt, and was doing all he could to alleviate the sufferings of the injured, whilst the groans and moans of the dying were filling the air with their agony.

Willing workers were quickly on the scene, dragging men, women, and children from beneath the wreckage, and Reginald had just turned from where a young mother, with her babe, had been laid down gently on the hill-side; she was

dead, quite dead, and it was only a moment that he gazed on the still, white face, when two men advanced with yet another ghastly burden; and as they laid her down—for it was a woman—with an unaccountable desire to see if she were also gone, he stooped to look on the features, when with a cry he was unable to restrain, he fell on his knees to chafe the hands of the sufferer, to call on her by name, to open her eyes and look on him, and hear that she was forgiven ere she went.

It was then that the voice she had once so fondly loved seemed to draw her back to life, as, with a slight quiver of the eyelids, they awoke; for one moment she looked into the face so near her own, when, with a last effort to meet the one last kiss so freely bestowed, she sank back a senseless corpse.

He arose from the cold damp ground, he had no further reason than to stay; all that had made his life an endless sorrow was finished now; all anger had vanished from his breast, pity alone remaining for the lifeless clay at his feet and turning his back he was about to quit the scene, when he became conscious of another who was looking down on the dead white face, and as far raising his head their eyes met, they read in each a hatred which would never die.

Another train soon arrived, and but a short time elapsed when they were once again steaming towards the metropolis; the elder ladies had almost recovered their composure, whilst Elsie, pale and trembling, was half led, half carried to the carriage in which Reginald tenderly placed her.

He could not bring himself then to tell her of the woman who, with the other dead, was conveyed to where the bodies would await identification, she who but a few short hours before had been, in the fulness of life and health, kneeling beside the coffin of her dearest friend.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

"No, no, let us get home quickly, auntie, dear," was Elsie's earnest entreaty, Captain Kerson having proposed that they should remain in London the next day; and her request being granted, they left by an early train for Singlethorpe.

A cold drizzly rain was falling when they once again entered the gates of the Manor, around which all appeared sad and dreary, the house itself looking so dismal with all the blinds drawn, and the wind moaning in wistful gales around its gables and sighing in the bare branches of the trees overhead.

In the room she had but a few short weeks since left in life, was placed the coffin of the dead sister awaiting burial, the funeral being arranged to take place on the following day.

All but Elsie had suffered no ill-effects from the railway collision, but with her it proved different. At first she seemed dazed, scarcely realising the danger which they had been in, and then she became the prey of fever, when in her fancies she felt more than in the moment of real peril.

"Shock to the system!" Dr. Partridge averred, when Sarah had asked his opinion, having lost no time in commanding his attendance.

He had been medical adviser to the family at the Manor ever since the three maiden ladies were girls like Elsie herself, and the old man felt a genuine regret when, after leaving the sick room of the latter, they led him to where Miss Musgrove lay in her last narrow bed.

"Very sad, very sad, indeed," he said, and then he went on to congratulate them on their narrow escape.

"And you really do not think there is anything very serious the matter with our niece?" Miss Sarah asked.

"I think not," was the reply; "quiet and good nursing will, I hope, in a few days do wonders."

But day succeeded day, and still Elsie tossed

and turned on a sick bed, but at last she was pronounced out of danger.

Captain Kerson was like one demented whilst the life of his darling hung in the balance, she falling to recognise the tones of his voice, or the touch of his hand when he would place it cool and gentle on her burning forehead; and it was at these times that he would go from her room, his big heart breaking, when he saw, as he thought, the life, which had become so a part of his own, slowly ebbing away.

Three weeks had thus passed when once again the dark velvety eyes opened with the light of reason. Miss Sarah was in the room, the sisters, seemingly jealous of each other in their attendance on the sick bed of their darling, having agreed to watch by turns.

"Have I been very ill, auntie?"

The former turned with a glad smile at Elsie, in her natural tones, thus addressed her.

"Yes, dear, you have been very ill," she replied; "but, thank Heaven, you are better now."

For a few moments after she was again quiet, whilst ever and anon she passed her thin transparent hand over her eyes, seemingly to remove the mist still hanging over her memory.

"Do you want anything, dearest?" Miss Sarah asked.

"No, auntie, no," the girl replied; "but I was thinking how it was that I came here;" then, with a shudder as the recollection of past events came to her. "Ah! I remember," she said, "poor Aunt Matilda's death, the railway accident, and then no more; but where are we now?"

"You are in your own little room at the Manor, my child."

"And Captain Kerson?" she asked.

There was a dread in her tone that the answer might bring her fresh sorrow, but when her aunt told her how he had been to see her day after day, when she was unconscious of his presence, a glad light came into her eyes, and Miss Sarah leaving her in the care of the nurse, hastened from the room to inform her sister of the happy change.

"May I see her at once?" Captain Kerson asked, who having called in the interim, was chatting with Eleanor when the former entered with her glad news.

"Yes," she replied, with a smile, "but you must promise not to excite her, for the prostration against which we have now to fight is almost as difficult a task as the other."

So it was very noiselessly that a few moments later Reginald was ushered into the sick room.

A faint flush came to the face of the girl when, on her aunt telling her that some one had come to see her, her eyes fell on the form of the young officer.

"Oh! so glad, so glad," she said, holding out her hands, and drawing his face down until his tawny moustache brushed her sunken cheek, and he pressed hot kisses on her lips, parched and dry from the late fever.

"Now we must be very quiet," he said, with judicious solemnity, as he moistened her mouth with the hothouse grapes he had brought with him, "or Aunt Sarah will send me away like a naughty boy!"

"No, no!" she answered, while a smile of happiness flitted over her countenance. "Oh! I am so happy—so happy!"

"And so am I, my darling!" was the reply, as he smoothed her curls, her head the while resting on his broad shoulder; and then he told her that she must make haste and get well, for he was waiting for his little wife.

There was no hesitation now in his tone, his eyes no longer wearing that sad look to which she had been so accustomed, and as she lovingly gazed on his features there recurred to her memory the mystery which had hitherto enveloped his life.

Was it that it no longer existed, she pondered, when a short time after with a tender kiss, and promise to see her on the morrow, he had, at her aunt's suggestion, left the room; and she wondered if the strange woman at Ilfracombe, whose presence seemed to influence his conduct, had anything to do with the skeleton in his home, of which her dead aunt had spoken.

And then it all came back to her mind—the

watch in the chamber of death, and the sob which had broken so suddenly on her senses, to be as quickly subdued when her presence had been detected, and Elsie determined to ask her aunt the solution of the mystery.

But from neither could she gain a promise that they would grant her request.

"When you are quite well, Elsie, you shall know all," they told her, and with that she had to remain satisfied, whilst day by day she was quickly recovering, until at last the roses once more bloomed on her pale cheek, and her merry laugh again resounded within the Manor walls.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A SAD STORY.

"THERE must be no secrets between us," Captain Kerson was saying, when some weeks later the ladies were entering with him on the subject of his approaching marriage with their niece. "Elsie must know all," he persisted, and so, in spite of the sisters' opinion that it was unnecessary to rake up the ashes of the dead, it was agreed that she should learn all from her aunts, they having been, in a way, mixed up in the game.

It was a bitter cold evening at the commencement of December, which enhanced, to a degree, the comfort surrounding the Manor drawing-room, where a huge coal fire threw its warmth and glow over the whole apartment.

Without the snow lay thick on lawn and terrace, whilst a bitter east wind drove the flakes before it, till they formed great heaps against the palisades which divided the former from the garden, where in summer flowers of every hue exhaled their fragrance.

Elsie had left the piano, where in the dark hour it was her custom to sing, whilst her aunts would dreamily, half asleep, half awake, listen to the tones of her rich contralto voice; but this night she had woken weary of the old songs—when hearing the instrument she nestled close to the side of the former.

For a time all were so silent that even the girl herself might have been supposed to have fallen into a gentle slumber, but her thoughts wandering from recent events to those which had occurred in the days which were passed, a sudden desire to have the mystery of those days revealed came to her.

"You will, auntie dear, won't you?" she asked, appealing to Miss Sarah, "tell me the story you promised to do when I was quite well again! Reginald would have told me himself this morning, but I would rather hear it from you," she added.

"Perhaps it would be better that you should know all, my darling," was the reply, "but I shall have to go back to many years ago, which, had it not been for circumstances which have occurred during the last few months, would have remained, as far as I am concerned, a sealed book."

"No, you need not light the lamp, Maria," she said, as a servant entered the room for that purpose. "I will ring when I desire it;" after which, stirring the fire into a blaze, with Elsie's head resting on her knee, Miss Musgrove commenced.

"I must go back sixteen years, to the time when, with our father, we and your father lived together beneath this roof; but it was not long before the former followed his wife, who had died but a few months previous, and we sisters and brother were then left the sole occupants."

After a few months Edward married, and, not listening a moment to the idea of our quitting the Manor in favour of his bride, he selected a home for her in the metropolis; but this arrangement not falling in with the wishes of your mother, we seldom met and were never, as you know, good friends.

However, she consoled herself with the prospect of a son being born, who would eventually be master here; but even in that she was doomed to disappointment, as we knew when we heard of your birth, and had it not been for Edward himself, we should never have known our little

niece, her wish being that you should never enter the Manor during our lifetime.

Amongst our acquaintances at Singlethorpe at that time was a Colonel Kerson, who, with his family, resided but a short distance from us; and we were on the most friendly terms, often bringing Reginald, then a lad of fifteen, with us to stay at the Manor, the only time when he was permitted, to his great delight, to handle a gun; besides which we having adopted as our own a little orphan whose mother had been a school-fellow in our young days, the children became devotedly attached to each other, and were always delighted at the prospect of being in each other's society.

"Florrie was then but nine years of age, a golden-haired fairy with large blue eyes, and a skin fair as alabaster."

"She was a great pet with all, but mostly so with Matilda, who idolised her."

"Thus five years passed away, Reginald had entered the army, and, being with his regiment, for a time we saw but little of him."

"I expect my boy home next month," Colonel Kerson told us one morning, "he has obtained three months' leave, previous to his leaving for India."

"India!" Florrie exclaimed, whilst the flush of pleasure which had swept over her fair face suddenly vanished, leaving her white as marble; and then I saw the tears well to her beautiful eyes.

"However, she controlled her emotions so far, never breaking down until we were again alone, when throwing her lovely arms round my sister's neck, she sobbed as though her heart would break."

"But at length she became calmer, looking forward anxiously to the day when Reginald should arrive, who, as I well know he would, come to the Manor without a moment's delay; and during the three months which intervened, with the consent of both families, they became engaged to each other."

"The last few days of his stay were drawing to a close, and we were quite prepared to see Florrie overwhelmed with grief at the prospect of the parting so close at hand; but, to our surprise, she was as merry as a cricket, only more than ever in the society of her lover, and we were little prepared for the scene which followed, when, the morning previous to the departure of the young officer, the Colonel himself appeared."

"He was in a towering rage—a fact he did not attempt to conceal—and even so far forgot himself as to accuse us of complicity in the ruin, as he termed it, of his boy's prospects."

"As we told him, we were entirely ignorant of what he meant, when cooling down a little, he told us that how, at the earnest entreaty of his betrothed, Reginald had resigned his commission, and thus thrown away a glorious future."

"So surprised we were at this announcement that we could scarcely find words to express the regret we felt at the turn affairs had taken; but as what was done could not be undone, we thought it useless to argue the point further."

"He shall never enter my doors again!" was the exclamation of our choleric friend, and he kept his word; but it was only a matter of a few days that Reginald was banished from the parental roof, for scarcely had a week passed when he was hastily summoned to the death-bed of the old soldier, who died in a fit of apoplexy, his wife surviving him but a short two months after."

"Poor Reginald was in great grief at the trials which had so suddenly overwhelmed him; but time and the many duties which, owing to the same, devolved upon him, roused him from his sorrow, and six months after he had performed the last rites to his dead parents he became the husband of our Florrie."

"We were very happy then, their home being but a short distance from our own; scarcely a day intervened that we did not see one or the other."

"They had now been married two years, when Reginald accidentally coming across a friend he had known when in the service, in a fatal moment he asked him to pay him a visit during the hot season, when life in London was unbearable."



"Lord Ingleton was many years the senior of his host, and the marked attentions he paid our beautiful Florrie were on that score only looked upon as such that a man of his years could with impunity bestow on one who to him was little more than a child, and we little dreamed of the evil which was brewing until, as an avalanche, we became buried beneath its weight.

"I shall never forget the morning that the sad truth was made known to us. It was June; we were sitting by the open window, through which the lovely scent of the roses, then in full bloom, was carried by the soft wind. Looking up from the embroidery on which I was engaged, I saw Reginald advancing to where we sat, and though so long ago, I can see him as I saw him then—his face literally convulsed with the emotion he was undergoing, his eyes starting from his head, whilst his whole frame shook visibly with the excitement under which he was labouring.

"What is the matter?" we asked simultaneously, when after entering through the open window he returned our greeting, and then sank into the nearest chair, covering his face with his hands, whilst groans of agony proceeded from his lips.

"He could not control himself sufficiently at first to answer our question, but holding to us a small note which he had so crushed in his first great anger that the writing was almost unintelligible, we read sufficient to know the worst, the story of a friend's perfidy and a woman's weakness, and the letter dropped from our grasp, we almost as overcome as himself at the contents.

"May the curses of heaven follow him wherever he goes!" he exclaimed at last, whilst the veins on his forehead stood out like big cords; but Matilda gently laying her hand upon his own,—

"Hush!" she said, "Vengeance is mine, with the Lord."

"And then when he became quieter we learnt how Florrie had left husband, home—all for the sake of a man who, by his subtle flattery, his title and his wealth, had lured her from the path of virtue.

"He who had so much," Reginald groaned, "and I but my pet ewe lamb!" when again burying his face in his hands, he endeavoured to hide the grief which had so unmanned him.

"What do you intend doing?" we asked, but he made no definite reply, and then he left us.

"After that he came one day to bid us goodbye. He was going abroad, he said, pending the divorce suit he had instituted, and for months we saw no more of him, nor heard of our darling.

"When he did return it was as a free man, not that we ever named the subject to him, but we read of the proceedings in the papers, and Florrie became Lady Ingleton. After that Reginald resumed his usual habits; but the effects of the blow he had received never left him, but there ever remained on his countenance the expression of sorrow which was still in his heart.

"One day he appeared sadder than usual, 'Florrie was dead,' he said, and then he showed us a paragraph cut from a foreign journal containing the statement that, owing to an accident when out driving, an English nobleman, Lord Ingleton and his lady had been seriously injured, and then one of a later date, regretting the death of the latter. From whom they came, we never knew; it was a strange handwriting, and had been sent evidently by some one who knew the story.

"There is so much to occupy our minds in this life," Miss Sarah continued, "that the dead are soon forgotten and Florrie's name was scarcely ever mentioned in the three years that followed, when the loss of our only brother, your father, filled our thoughts, and then you came."

"And Reginald loved this woman so much, auntie," Elsie asked, raising her head, whilst there was a tinge of jealousy in her tone.

"He did, my darling, but when the idol was smashed at his feet he cared no longer to pick up the pieces; he pined her, but nothing would ever have induced him to have restored to her the place she once held in his heart and home, whilst his sense of honour would have prevented him from making another his wife whilst she

lived; and, strange to say, he always had a presentiment that she was not dead, although we tried to convince him to the contrary.

There then occurred to Elsie the moments in which she could not account for the sudden change in his manner towards her.

"And does she still live, do you think, auntie?" she asked, but before Miss Sarah could reply, Captain Kerzon himself appeared on the scene, when, after a short time, remembering that they had some important writing to do before supper, the former with her sister left the room.

(Continued on page 14.)

## A TIMELY WITNESS.

—101—

FOR many long days the *Dawnless*, brig-of-war, one of the vessels of our commodore's squadron for the suppression of piracy, had vainly cruised about the rocks and islands in search of the fierce desperadoes who were said to infest those shores. One morning, while the red sunlight was struggling through a gathering haze which had just veiled from our sight a ship in the offing, a man was seen standing on a distant rock signalling the brig.

The captain sent Mr. Marker—a rather supercilious young midshipman—with a cutter, containing a swivel and twenty armed men, to ascertain if the signalling stranger wanted to come aboard.

As the boat proceeded, and the fog thickened, Mr. Marker began to upbraid the coxswain, Granger, for his steering, though it could not be excused.

"If you don't do better," he shouted, angrily, "I will have you reported."

This coxswain was particularly obnoxious to Mr. Marker, because he had lately saved the life of one of the midshipmen while he (Marker) was thinking about it. It had happened during a heavy gale.

A little midgy—the first lieutenant's son—had fallen overboard, and while Mr. Marker—who, though brave, was also cautious—was hesitating as to whether he could rescue him by tying a rope to his breast and jumping overboard after him, Granger, one of the fore-mast hands, who was a spirited, intelligent young fellow of seventeen, full of quick decision and ready daring, performed the manoeuvre successfully, and brought the little fellow safely aboard. For this act Granger was promoted coxswain.

"Now mind your self," continued Mr. Marker, as the boat approached the rock on which the form of the stranger could be dimly made out through the fog. "Be careful how you steer, or I will have you broken and put back where you were before."

The young coxswain controlled his temper, though it was hard to do so. Meanwhile the stranger descended the rock.

"You want to board the brig?" said the midshipman, watching him akenance.

He was a middle-aged man, with keen eyes, a nose slightly beaked, and he wore a long, closely-fitting surtout.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Well, my orders were to bring you aboard—so step in, if you please."

The other entered the boat, quietly seated himself, and then came the order to give way.

As the boat dashed along the midshipman peered warily about him, and now and then stole a glance at the passenger.

"He does not look like a pirate," thought the youth, "but I shall keep my eye upon him."

Just then, emerging from behind a rock, and taking a position directly ahead of the cutter at the end of a narrow passage, between two low reefs, appeared a large boat containing about twenty desperate-looking cut-throats, wearing woollen caps, broad sashes, and armed with pistols and dirks.

There was no mistaking these swarthy fellows with their fierce, lowering visages; they belonged

to the numerous horde of pirates for whom the man-o'-war's men had been searching. On the evil face of the steersman, a giant in size, might have been observed a triumphant sardonic grin.

"Ho! my fine fellows, we have you fast!" he shouted. "The hunted now have the best of the hunters!"

"We will see about that!" replied Mr. Marker. "Now, boys," he added, addressing his crew, "we must fight, and I hope you will give a good account of yourselves."

As he spoke he looked at the stranger who had been taken off the rock. The keen eyes of this man were fixed upon the outlaws, and he had produced a pistol from under his coat; but Marker suspected that he was some traitor who had purposely brought about this meeting with the pirates.

"Had not you better make use of your swivel before you close with the rascals!" he said, in a deep voice.

"I know my own business best," answered the midshipman.

Then a troubled look crossed his face, for now another boat, containing a dozen more pirates, appeared from out the mist, astern of the cutter.

"We are hemmed in!" he muttered. "Traitor!" he added, addressing the stranger, "this is your work!"

"You are mistaken," was the cool reply.

"I shall keep an eye on you, at all events. Back water!" he continued, speaking to the crew. "The rascals are too many for us."

"What do you propose to do?" inquired the stranger.

"To get out of this the best way I can, if you would like to know. Sight the swivel," he added, to the bowmen, "and ply the fellows ahead with it, while we try to get through that opening in the reef. Lively, boys!"

Some of the pirates already had begun to fire their pistols at the cutter's people, while the rest pulled towards the receding boat.

An old man-o'-war's-man was shot dead, and two others were wounded.

Then the report of the swivel was heard, but the pirates, lying well over, avoided the shot.

Before the piece could be re-loaded the bullets from the foe were again flying thick and fast, and another man fell dead.

"There is a shoal astern of us, sir. We shall probably ground upon it," cried the young coxswain, Granger. "Then the pirates will have us at their mercy. Had not we better make a dash at the rascals who are firing at us? We can whip them before the others come up."

"Ay, ay, that's the best thing to do," came the deep voice of the stranger.

"Mind your own business, both of you," said Marker. "As for you, Granger—don't let me hear another word from you, or I will have you up for mutiny."

Ere he could finish the sentence a bullet struck him slantingly on the head, inflicting a painful though not mortal wound, which threw him down dazed and bewildered, unfitting him for the command, which thus devolved upon Granger.

"Now, boys, have at them!" the coxswain shouted. "PULL AHEAD!"

This order was obeyed with alacrity, and with a hearty cheer.

As the cutter rapidly advanced upon the pirates, the swivel, which had been re-loaded, was fired at the outlaws, killing several of their number.

Mr. Marker's eyes began to roll. He gazed round him in a bewildered manner.

"You are going the wrong way," he said, in a faint voice; "or is it because my brain is whirling that I am mistaken? Retreat! We must retreat!" he added, as his head dropped upon his breast.

"No! no! A few more strokes AHEAD, my lads, and we will be upon them!" shouted Granger, in a ringing voice.

The next moment the cutter crashed against the other boat, when a desperate combat ensued.

The pirates fought fiercely, but their opponents wielded their cutlasses and used their pistols with daring intrepidity, and with the determined energy of plucky men trained for conflict. Cheering them on, Granger threw himself

into the thick of the fray, slashing right and left with a powerful arm. The stranger, with a cutlass snatched from a fallen sailor, fought like a lion, his strong, deep voice blending with the coxswain's as he laid about him with might and main. The clash of steel, the report of small arms, the hoarse cries of the cutter's men, and the tiger-like "Hi-yahs!" of the pirates, echoed with strange din among the rocks. At length the outlaws were so badly cut up that they would have retreated but for the approach of their other boat with its reinforcements.

As it drew near, however, the stranger contrived to bring the swirl to bear upon this craft, and fired a shot that stove the boat, when, seeing there was no longer hope for them, all the pirates made off, disappearing among the rocks.

"We are the victors," said the stranger, quietly. "A bold dash, even with the odds against you, is often better than a retreat."

"True," said Granger. "Had we continued to back away from the pirates we should have grounded, and had the rascals in both boats upon us!"

"You—ah—you disobeyed orders," said Mr. Marker, whom a sip of brandy had slightly strengthened. "I—I will have you shot for mutiny!"

"From first to last, after you were hit, you were not fit to command, sir," replied the coxswain.

"We will see what a court-martial has to say on the subject!" retorted the midshipman.

This made Granger uneasy. He had always prided himself on doing his duty, but he knew that Mr. Marker could so represent his conduct as to influence a court-martial against him.

The cutter now was headed in search of the brig, which was at last sighted through the fog and boarded.

The captain, on seeing the stranger, started as if surprised, then, as the latter said something to him in a low voice, he accompanied him into the cabin.

Meanwhile Mr. Marker proceeded to describe to the officer of the deck what he was pleased to term his coxswain's disobedience of orders, when the officer at once ordered Granger to be arrested and put in the brig—a place between two guns forward, where delinquents were confined.

Sad and disconsolate, Granger now anticipated the punishment inflicted on a mutineer—death at the yard-arm, or by the bullets of the marines. And yet he had performed a gallant action—the only one that had saved the man-o'-war's men and given them the victory. When he took upon himself the command and made his bold dash at the pirates he had known that Mr. Marker, who had opposed the movement, was too much daunted and bewildered to clearly realise what he was about; but was there any hope that the members of the court-martial would believe him when he said so?

The long day and the night passed. Several times Granger had seen groups of men near him, and heard them conversing in low voices, whilst they glanced ominously towards him.

Next morning, just after daybreak, the boat-swain was heard piping all hands on deck. Then followed the roll of the drum, after which was heard the harsh voice of the lieutenant of marines. The clattering of muskets succeeded, then the master-at-arms made his appearance in the "brig."

"What's up, Thompson?" inquired Granger, sadly.

"You're to go on deck with me," answered Thompson, with a gloomy face. "God only knows what they are going to do with you, but there's a file of marines in the gangway with loaded muskets!"

The master-at-arms now led the prisoner on deck. The file of marines stood like statues in the gangway. Near them was the captain, and close to him the stranger who had been taken from the rock. The crew were ranged further forward.

"Mr. Marker," said the stranger, turning to the midshipman, who stood a few paces off, "you think that a few shots would serve this fellow right!" pointing to Granger as he spoke.

"Ah, for his mutiny, his disobedience of orders," answered Marker, fiercely.

"Marines," continued the stranger, "do your duty. Give the coxswain a volley—a volley in his honour! Fire over his head!"

The crew stared in wonder. Mr. Marker started. The marines did not budge, but looked in surprise at the speaker, whom neither they nor any of the sailors had ever seen before he was sighted on the rock, and yet who ordered them so peremptorily. But now, quickly divesting himself of his surcoat, the stranger disclosed the uniform of a Commodore! while at the same time the captain shouted—

"Do as you are bid, marines! He whom you see is the Commodore of the squadron!"

In an instant the muskets were raised, and the volley of honour roared over Granger's head.

"Now off with his irons!" cried the commodore.

The handcuffs were quickly whipped off by the delighted master-at-arms; then the commodore, addressing the crew, eulogised Granger's conduct in taking command of, and in manoeuvring, the cutter as he had done, after Midshipman Marker was dazed by the shot which struck him, and which, from first to last, unfitted him for giving proper orders.

"Ay," he continued, "and I am now glad that I remained on the rock to take a view of the channels and reefs near it, while I sent my ship's barge to explore some of the labyrinths of the lair—am even glad that the men of the barge, for some reason or other, could not find their way back to me, as it has enabled me to be a witness to this brave coxswain's behaviour, of which I fully approve, and for which he deserves reward instead of punishment. Therefore, as soon as possible, I shall see that he be promoted by receiving a midshipman's warrant, which was never more worthily earned or better deserved!"

Words could not describe Granger's joy and the mortification of Mr. Marker. Many a cordial shake of the hand did the gratified coxswain receive from his shipmates and chums, young and old, while all hands joined in applauding the conduct of the noble and just-hearted commodore.

## FOR LOVE'S SWEET SAKE.

—102—

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### SYBIL'S CONQUEST.

THE next evening Clarice was to go to her first ball, and practically to make her debut in county society. The dance was at the house of a certain Lady Sinclair, and it was given in honour of the coming of age of her eldest son. Lady Fairfax had been slightly acquainted with Lady Sinclair, and through her introduction the Cravens received an invitation to the ball. Lennox himself would rather have stayed at home, but Clarice had all a girl's eager anxiety to see something of the gaieties of life, and, of course, he could do no less than escort her.

When Sybil Marsh arrived at Hurst Royal, Clarice had written to ask if she could be included in the invitation; and on Lady Sinclair's assuring her that any friend of hers would be welcome, she had at once ordered a dress for her visitor, which was in every respect as handsome as her own.

Sybil professed extreme gratitude for the gift.

"You are too good to me," she murmured, kissing Clarice's cheek, as the box lay before her with the lustrous shimmer of yellow satin showing from beneath the coverings of silver paper. "I should hesitate to accept your kindness if I did not know that to you it is pleasanter to give than to receive. How delightful it must be to have the power of being generous! I have never known the luxury of it."

Clarice, happily for herself, was young enough to live in the present moment, and put from her, for the time being, all those sad recollections which might have marred her pleasure.

As she came downstairs into the hall, where

her husband was waiting for her, she looked the most radiant image of youth and joy it is possible to imagine.

Her dress was white, as befitting a bride of not two months' standing; in her hair, and at her bosom, were buds of pale pink roses; her only ornament was a string of lustrous pearls encircling a throat as white as themselves. With a shy consciousness of her beauty, she paused in front of her husband and glanced up into his face.

"How do I look, Lennox?"

"You look a dream of loveliness, but there is something so fairy-like and ethereal about you, that one would not be surprised to see you melting away into the moonbeams. Do you know, darling," he added, as he wrapped her satin-lined cloak round her, "I believe I must have something of the Turk in me, for I feel quite jealous at the idea of other men's eyes feasting on your fairness. I think if I had my way, I should lock you up in a suite of rooms, like an Eastern Princess, and defy any man, under penalty of death, to look upon you!"

She laughed, and tapped him lightly on the cheek with her ostrich-feather fan.

At this moment Sybil appeared, clad in the superb yellow satin, whose colour threw her dark beauty into bold relief. Her hair was piled high on her head and wreathed in a sort of coronal above her brow; in her bosom she wore some deep-hearted crimson roses. Altogether, she looked splendid enough to challenge attention anywhere.

"How well you become yellow satin!" exclaimed Clarice, admiringly. "I suppose you don't feel quite so excited as I do, because this is not your first ball."

"But that is exactly what it is," returned Sybil. "Have I not told you that, before I came to be your companion at Sunningdale Court, I had lived in the strictest seclusion possible, not going out anywhere?"

Clarice struck her hands delightedly together.

"Fancy, two debutantes going under your wing to-night, Lennox! I suppose, though, that, as I am the married woman, I am the chaperone of the party! Mind you both behave properly. I shall keep a strict eye on you all the time!"

"I expect you will be too greatly besieged by partners to be able to spare much time for other people's affairs," her husband replied, and his prophecy was fulfilled.

Clarice was without doubt the success of the evening; even Sybil, handsome as she was, was hardly looked at when she was by. The fact that she was a bride, and the whisper of her romantic marriage with the well-known explorer, added to the interest of her appearance, so that in her progress through the brilliantly-lighted ballroom, she was followed by the eager gaze of admiring crowds.

Lennox danced very little; it was not an exercise he was fond of, but it pleased him to see his wife so thoroughly enjoying herself, and suggested an idea to him.

"Perhaps it would do her good to take her out into the world, and let her mix with society, she would not then have time to dwell on her father's death, and I might persuade her to let the matter drop. She is only a mere girl, and it ought not to be difficult for me to influence her. I fancied, before our marriage, that her will would bend to mine in any matter of real importance."

His eyes had been following his wife as she valued slowly round the room with young Lord Sinclair, but now she took her partner's arm and went in the direction of the refreshment-room, doubtless in quest of an ice. At the same moment Sybil Marsh came in sight, with flashed cheeks and sparkling eyes, dancing with a tall, dark, disipated-looking young man whom Lennox recognised as Sir Colin Middlemore—a well-known racing man, who was said to have ruined himself through his devotion to the turf. He had come up to Craven earlier in the evening and requested an introduction to Miss Marsh, and Lennox, as he fulfilled the request, had caught a swift look of intelligence exchanged between the two, which seemed to hint at some previous un-



darstanding. Since then, they had danced several times together, and at the conclusion of this special value, they made their way outside on the terrace, where fairy lanterns gleamed amidst the darkness of the shrubs, looking like great tropical flowers that the magic wand of an enchanter had called into blossom.

At the far end of the terrace was a little alcove cut in the thickness of the laurel bushes, and hither the two betook themselves.

"You look thundering handsome to-night, Sybil," said Middlemore, with honest admiration. "Tell you straight, I had no idea you were so beautiful."

Her lip curled a little scornfully, though she was woman enough to be pleased at the compliment.

"Fine feathers make fine birds, and I have never been able to afford decent dresses—even this I owe to charity. But I expect the true reason why you admire me to-night is because you see other people doing it," she added, shrewdly. "Men are all the same—just like a flock of sheep who follow a leader. As soon as they see a woman admired by others, she goes up in their estimation by leaps and bounds."

"I suppose that's true," he drawled, nursing his leg. "For myself I always preferred the rose whose loveliness all the world can see to the modest violet hiding in the shade. By jove, that's quite poetical! You see what a miracle you have wrought, Sybil."

His half playful tone jarred on her, but there was a strange softness in her great black eyes as they were lifted to his.

"Collin," she whispered, softly, drawing a little nearer, and putting her hand on his arm, "I have heard that love does work miracles, and I know it has done so in my case. I never thought I had it in me to care for anyone as I care for you."

He slipped his arm round her waist and drew her head on his shoulder, while he kissed her brow.

"Poor little woman! It's deuced good of you to love me; I'm not sure I deserve it."

"I know you don't deserve it!" was her fierce and unexpected retort, as she drew herself from him, and sat upright. "If you had done so, you would have kept your promise and come to meet me at Grey Friars last Friday."

"I couldn't, Sybil, I give you my word I was feeling so utterly done up, I simply couldn't move that day. As a matter of fact I lay on the couch in my dressing-room the whole blessed morning and afternoon, and if a fellow had not dropped in and had a game at cards with me, I don't know what on earth I should have done to pass the time."

"I don't believe you, Collin. The fact was you had not seen me for so long that the impression I made on you had faded, and you were half inclined to throw me over—wasn't that it?"

"Of course it wasn't. I was simply delighted when I heard you were coming down to this part of the world, and I thought you deuced clever to have managed it. How was it you came to fix on Grey Friars as a rendezvous?"

"Don't you remember telling me about the house when we last met in London? You said it was supposed to be haunted, and in consequence of that it was shunned by everybody, so I thought we might have a good long talk together without fear of interruption. I inquired at the station how far it was, and learned that there was a public-house within half a mile, so I drove to the inn, left my luggage there, and then went on to Grey Friars and waited for you."

"How long did you wait?"

"Some hours."

"Poor little woman!" he said again, raising her hand to his lips. "It was too bad of me, I confess. Well, and did you see the ghost?"

She broke into a laugh.

"No, but I saw someone else—no less a person than Mrs. Lennox Craven. I heard someone moving in the room and naturally supposed it to be you; I was horrified to find my error. However, she was equally frightened, and luckily I recovered my presence of mind first, so I gently closed the door, and locked it on the

outside, for I did not know any minute that you might not arrive, and it would never have done for her to have seen us together. I waited and waited, but you did not come, and the only adventure I had was a singularly unpleasant one. I had crept up to the door of the room where Mrs. Craven was, to peep through the keyhole and see what she was doing, and just as I was descending the stairs, my foot tripped, and I was thrown forward. I caught at the first thing I could to save myself, but a jagged, rusty nail sticking out of the wall, somehow tore the flesh of my arm, and it bled a good deal, and gave me a considerable amount of pain. Still, all's well that ends well, and I'm none the worse for it now."

"Why didn't you write to me after your arrival at Hurst Royal?" he asked.

"Because I was cross with you, and besides, I felt sure I should meet you here to-night, and I thought I would give you a surprise."

"You succeeded. You might have knocked me down with a feather when I recognised you. I thought the safest plan would be to ask Craven to introduce us as I saw you were with his party. By Jove, Sybil, you look so handsome that I am more in love with you than ever."

His voice and manner left no doubt of his sincerity. Sybil nestled closer in his arms, and looked up in his face.

"Enough in love with me to marry me!" she whispered, softly.

He moved uneasily.

"I'm afraid that's out of the question at present. I am so frightfully in debt that I can't move hand or foot. My estate is mortgaged to its full value—in point of fact I have about come to the end of my tether, and if something does not turn up soon, I shall go under altogether. The only thing for me would be marriage with an heiress."

Sybil started, and drew herself from him, at which he laughed.

"Oh, you need not be angry. Heiresses don't grow on gooseberry bushes, and I haven't one in view at the present moment. Perhaps if I had it would be much the same, for I am not at all disposed to resign my liberty to a woman I don't care twopence about. Now if it were you it would be quite different."

"You mean," she said, slowly, "that if I had money, you would make me your wife?"

"Like a shot. But I'm afraid there isn't much chance of that, is there?"

"Stranger things have happened," she whispered, with a catch in her breath. "Life is uncertain, and there is only one life between me and wealth—between me and happiness—"

She broke off abruptly, for a movement in the shrubs showed her that someone was near. It proved to be Lennox Craven.

"Miss Marsh is that you? I have been looking for you. My wife is tired, and ready to go home if you are."

"Certainly, Mr. Craven," she replied, rising, and making her adieu to Middlemore in the conventional manner of ball-room acquaintances, though her cheek was white, and her voice slightly unsteady when she spoke.

As she took Lennox's offered arm, she was wondering how much of the conversation he had overheard. As a matter of fact, he had heard very little, only that last sentence, "One life between me and wealth!" But it set him thinking.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"GOOD BYE, SWEETHEART!"

ALTHOUGH it was dawn when she went to bed, Clarice was up in fairly good time the next morning, and out in the garden gathering the little posy of flowers that she never failed to put on her husband's plate at breakfast. In her white cambric dress, with its delicate lace and dainty knots of blue ribbon, she looked exquisitely fresh and sweet; she was so young that not a trace of fatigue was visible in her face, although she had danced indefatigably the evening before.

The garden was a wilderness of blossom and

fragrance. Roses red, white, and golden, were still blossoming against the ruddy brickwork of the south wall, while tall hollyhocks, varying in colour from palest primrose to deepest ruby, made a background in the flower-border for mignonette and monkshood, pansies and phlox—all still steeped in pearly dew that glistened with prismatic radiance as the sun struck across it.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the sound of a gun, followed by another, and another. Clarice started, and then ran across the lawn to her husband, who was standing on the gravelled terrace, with Sybil by his side.

"Why, Lennox, it is the first of September!" she exclaimed.

"Well, and what of that?" he asked, smiling at her tone and manner.

"Only that I thought you would have been out with your gun after partridges, as all British gentlemen think it is their bounden duty to do. Perhaps you forgot it was the first to-day!"

"No, darling, I did not; but I don't intend to shoot this season."

"Why not? You have always done so before."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps so; but I was never married before, please remember, and I think I like your society better than the partridges. But pray come in to breakfast. We—that is Miss Marsh and I—are dying for a cup of coffee."

"Poor things!" murmured Clarice, with mock sympathy, as she took her seat at the end of the table. She glanced round inquiringly. "Where is Purser?" she added to her husband. Purser was Lennox's valet, and always made a rule of waiting on his master at meals.

"I have sent him away for a few days' holiday," Craven replied, without meeting her glance.

"That was rather a sudden determination on your part, wasn't it?"

"Most of my determinations are sudden—haven't you found that out yet?"

"Where has he gone for his holiday?" pursued Clarice, who was evidently astonished.

"I really don't know. To see his relatives, most probably, but I can't tell you where they live."

"On the Continent, I should imagine," put in Sybil; "I was in the library yesterday morning when he came in and fetched the Continental Bradshaw. When he brought it back I asked him if he had found what he wanted, and he said he had, so I concluded he must have been looking out trains."

"You are a close observer, Miss Marsh," said Lennox, with a slight wrinkling of his brows.

"Indeed she is," Clarice exclaimed, "she has the most wonderful system of inductive reasoning, and I must confess the conclusions she arrives at are generally correct. I found that much out while she was with us at Sunningdale Court. Now, I dare say she could even tell us where Purser has actually gone—couldn't you, Sybil?"

"Not with certainty. But I would hazard a guess that his destination was Florence."

Lennox started visibly.

"What makes you think that, Miss Marsh?"

"The simplest thing in the world. After Purser had put the Bradshaw back in its place, I reached it down because I wanted to see how much it would cost to get to Lucerne, and the book opened at the leaf that gives the Italian trains."

"Italy is a large place. Even if Purser were going there it doesn't follow that he should be going to Florence."

"Certainly not. Only there was the mark of a thumb-nail against one of the Florence trains, and that made me fancy he might be," Sybil returned, unconcernedly, as she buttered her toast and helped herself to some marmalade.

Lennox pushed his plate away, with a slight laugh that had a ring of annoyance in it.

"Really, Miss Marsh, you challenge my admiration—you are a feminine edition of Sherlock Holmes. I shall be quite afraid of you if you go on like this."

"Why should you be afraid? I am not likely to find out anything you wish to hide. Besides,

It is not at all probable you have any secrets to conceal. Secrets are risky things, and you are—if I judge you correctly—much too cautious to indulge in them. By the way, what are you going to do this morning, Clarice?" turning to her young hostess.

"Sit in the garden, I think, and read a novel. It looks as if it were going to be a scorching day, from the cloudless sky, and I think the shadiest part of the lawn will be the nicest place. What are your plans?"

"I was going to ask if I might have the pony-carriage and drive into H—. I have some shopping to do—very uninteresting shopping, or I should ask you to come with me—only calico and cotton and a little bit of silk to finish my embroidery."

"Have the pony-carriage, by all means. If you like to wait till to-morrow I will drive you in myself."

But Sybil preferred not waiting, and so, at about eleven o'clock, she set off in the smart little Rall car, driven by an equally smart little groom. Lennox saw her start, and then sat for a little while with his wife, lost, as it seemed, in meditation. Quite suddenly he got up.

"I shall have Jessica saddled and go for a ride Clarice—perhaps into H—. Have you any commissions for me to do?"

She shook her head.

"None, thank you. I must not deprive myself of an excuse for driving there to-morrow. I think a ride will do you good, Lennox—you seem a little out of sorts this morning."

She watched him off, but happily for her own peace of mind she did not see the change that came over his face when she left him. His eyes grew anxious, the two upright lines on his brow deeper. He looked what he was—a man fighting desperately against some terrible fear.

His destination was the office of a solicitor named Marlow, who lived at the far end of the town of H— that is to say, in the part farthest from the shops. He left his horse outside in the charge of a boy, and then entering the office, where a couple of clerks were busy writing, he asked whether Mr. Marlow was in.

"He is in, sir, but he is engaged at the present moment," was the reply. "He is sure not to be long, for the lady has been with him some time. Would you like to wait?"

Lennox said he would, and was accordingly ushered into an inner office, where he sat down. This, in its turn, led into the sanctum of Mr. Marlow himself, and Craven had not waited many minutes before the door was opened, and then partially closed again, as if the lady—for it soon became clear that the client was a lady—had waited for a few last words.

"Then I am to understand you clearly, Mr. Marlow, that in the case I have stated to you, the property would not go to the husband?"

"Not the real property—by which I mean land and estates. As I have already told you, that would devolve on the heir-at-law, or heiress, as the case may be."

"Thank you, I am much obliged." The door, which had not been actually shut, was now thrown open, and there came out no less a person than Miss Sybil Marsh.

For a moment, as she and Lennox faced each other, she was clearly taken aback, but almost directly she recovered her self-possession.

"Dear me, Mr. Craven, you gave me quite a start. I had finished my shopping, and then it occurred to me to come and satisfy myself on a legal point that closely concerns a great friend of mine. Are you here to make your will?"—with a forced laugh.

"Something of the sort, Miss Marsh," he responded, grimly, as he stood aside to let her pass, and then followed Mr. Marlow to the inner room. The solicitor smiled.

"Women are all the same—it is invariably the case of a friend they are anxious about, never their own. They remind me of an ostrich, hiding his head in the sand, and oblivious of the great body and two long legs sticking out behind."

It was close on seven o'clock when Lennox reached home that evening, and as dinner was at half-past, he calculated he had only just time to

dress. On the top of the stairs he was met by his wife, who held a flimsy bit of pink paper in her hand.

"It is a telegram that came for you Lennox, about half an hour ago, and I opened it. It is from poor Parser, who wires from Milan, to say that there has been an accident to the train he was in, and one of his legs is injured too badly to allow him to be moved. Is it not sad?—and just as he was on his holiday, too."

Craven took the telegram from her, and went into his dressing-room to read it, while she followed. He made no comment, but it was clear from his expression that he was greatly perturbed, and he walked up and down the room once or twice as if to gain time for thought. Then he said,—

"I think I shall have to go and look after the poor fellow, Clarice. The injury to his leg is probably even worse than he makes out, and it is quite possible his life may be in danger. He is too good and trusted a servant to neglect, besides, he has many times proved his devotion to me, and I should be most ungrateful if I deserted him in his distress. I don't like leaving you, sweetheart, but it seems to me I must set out for Milan to-night—that is to say, I must catch the last train up to town, and go by the Continental express in the morning."

"Why shouldn't I come with you, Lennox? I have often longed to go to Italy, and this seems a good opportunity."

"Quite out of the question, Clarice. This is not a visit of pleasure, remember, but of painful duty. You would be miserable."

"I don't see why I need be. I can stay quietly at the hotel while you see to Parser, and when he gets better we can continue our journey to Florence or Rome. Besides," she came closer to him, and laid her little white hand on his coat sleeve, "your mother lives in Italy, Lennox, could you not take me to see her?"

Lennox started almost with a look of horror.

"Impossible—utterly impossible!" he exclaimed, while poor Clarice fell back, with quivering lips and eyes ready to fill with tears.

"My darling, I hate to grieve you, but you must know the truth. My mother strongly disapproved of my marriage. You see I was her only son, and I suppose she thought she would lose me if I married, so she tried her best to dissuade me from doing so. She is a strange woman, and it is as likely as not that she would refuse to see you even if I took you to her. I would rather have kept this from you if it had been possible, but, after all, it is, perhaps, better that you should know the truth. In time my mother may come round—indeed, I feel sure she will, but not yet, not so soon after what she calls my defiance of her wishes. Besides, there is Miss Marsh to consider. You invited her here for a month, did you not?"

"Oh, Sybil would not mind, she could come with us. She was saying this afternoon how much she should like to go on the Continent. Still, as you refuse to let me accompany you, there is no more to be said."

Clarice was deeply wounded, and, as she spoke, turned away in order to hide the tears that had now, in spite of her efforts, overflowed their barriers. Lennox drew her into his arms in his own masterful fashion.

"Clarice, do you think if I could help it I would be separated from you for one moment? I tell you that I am never happy when you are out of my sight. But I can no more command circumstances than can other men, and this journey is a duty. I cannot leave poor Parser in the lurch."

"Indeed, indeed, I don't wish you to!" she exclaimed, eagerly, "at the same time I don't see why I shouldn't come with you, even if we don't see your mother."

"The journey would be a very fatiguing one for you. I shall just rush through as fast as I can without stopping anywhere, and, if I find Parser is able to be moved I shall bring him back to England, where he will get proper nursing and attendance. If he is too ill to leave Milan I shall wire over for an English nurse and come back to you as soon as I can. Believe me, I shan't be absent a moment longer than I can help, and we

will go abroad later on, when the cold weather comes, and there is no sunshine here—you will like that infinitely better I am sure."

Clarice made no answer. She was not entirely convinced, but as it was clear that Lennox had made up his mind, it seemed useless to urge her point. She helped him to bundle a few articles of clothing into a Gladstone bag, and then they both went down to dinner, a silent and hurried meal, over which the brooding shadow of some impending disaster seemed to hang. Lennox had already ordered the dog-cart, and it came round to the door before dinner was actually over. However, he pushed aside his plate and rose immediately.

"Good-bye, Miss Marsh. I shan't be away long, but during my absence I shall look to you to take care of my wife, and see that she does not over-exert herself by taking too long walks or doing too much in the garden," he said, as he shook hands with Sybil.

She gave him a swift glance from under her lashes that he had afterwards cause to remember—it looked like the triumph of one into whose hands fate has unexpectedly played.

"You may trust me, Mr. Craven. No one in the world—excepting yourself—takes so much interest in Clarice's welfare as I do."

The farewell between husband and wife was more pathetic than there seemed any necessity for, considering how short a period they were likely to be separated. Forgetful of her wounded pride at Lennox's refusal to let her accompany him, Clarice clung to him with a passionate sorrow that woke a strange echo in his own heart.

"My darling, don't give way like this—I shall be back with you in less than a week," he said, tenderly, trying to soothe her.

"I have a dreadful fancy that you won't, Lennox. Life is so uncertain, and all kinds of accidents may happen to keep us apart."

"Nonsense, sweetheart! You are nervous and overwrought; to-morrow things will look quite different to you. I shall write every day, and you must let me hear how you are getting on, and everything that you do. Now, good-bye, my wife, my heart's only love!"

He strained her to his breast, kissed her passionately, and then, not trusting himself to turn round, left her, little thinking under what circumstances they would meet again.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TERRIBLE TRUTH.

It was a lovely evening, soft and balmy, as only September evenings often are; so when the two ladies went to the drawing-room they sat in front of the open French window, watching the harvest moon climbing the sky from behind the distant woods, Clarice having given orders that the lamps within should not be lighted.

Sybil rallied her on her silence.

"You look as woe-begone as if Lennox had left you for ever!" she exclaimed. "Now if I were in your place, I should regard his absence as a pleasant interlude, because your meeting again will be quite a renewal of the honeymoon. You are a curious mixture, Clarice—on the one hand so determined in certain ways as to verge on obstinacy, and on the other so entirely dependent on the people you care for. In certain ways you are very like your father; but, for the rest, I expect you resemble your mother."

"I expect I do," the young wife returned, mutely. "I never knew her, but from her likeness I should think she had a deeply affectionate nature—anyhow, she was devoted to my father."

"She was an heiress, was she not?" Sybil asked, in a would-be indifferent tone.

"Yes. It was her money that freed the Sunningdale Court estate from debt, and made my father a rich man. He was poor enough before his marriage."

"And her wealth has devolved on you?" Clarice nodded assent, and, after a pause, Sybil continued—



"Did she make a will, or did you simply inherit as heir-at-law?"

"My mother made a will, giving her husband the whole of her property, and then it descended to me. By the way, I suppose now I am married I ought to make a will, too. It never struck me before, but I will do it without delay."

Sybil started violently. Luckily for her, the dusk hid the sudden pallor that overspread her features. It was a minute before she could command her voice sufficiently to speak.

"Surely there is no necessity for you to be in a hurry—or, indeed, for you to make a will at all. You will have children, and then it will be time enough to think of the disposition of your property. Besides, I suppose if anything happened to you, it would all go to your husband."

Clarice laughed.

"Why, Sybil, you are even more ignorant of the law than I am. If I were to die to-morrow without a will, Lennox would take nothing at all. You see my wealth consists of landed estates, and they would go to what lawyers call the heir-at-law."

"And who would that be?"

"My Aunt, Lady Falcar, I suppose, but I am not quite sure. You see I have no brothers or sisters; if I had, they would come in first."

"You seem to know a great deal about the subject," said Sybil, with a slightly forced laugh.

"Not very much in reality, although I made a few inquiries before I was married, when my father's old lawyer came over to see me. I will write to him to-morrow, and give him instructions for making my will. As I was saying to-night to Lennox, life is uncertain, and there are certain people I should like to leave legacies to in case of my death."

"Put it off until your husband's return," said Sybil. "He will be able to help and advise you, and in these matters a man generally knows better than a woman. I am going in the garden," she added, rising, and stepping on the gravelled terrace, "it is delightfully fresh out here, but you had better not come, in case you should take cold. Remember, I promised your husband to look after you."

Clarice made no attempt to follow her, and she walked to the other end of the terrace, where she came to a pause. An extraordinary change was visible in her face—the mask she had kept on before her companion slipped away, leaving the features pale, distorted, almost diabolical in the fierce hatred and determination of their expression. She clenched her hands together until the nails pressed in the soft, pink palms, while her very lips grew white.

"She must not make that will. What a fool I was to say anything to her that could suggest the idea! It would alter everything—it would scatter my plans in the dust. No, whatever besides, I must prevent that!"

She remained standing there, lost in deep thought, until her ear was caught by a low, peculiar whistle, the sound of which made her raise her head alertly. A man's form was darkly outlined against the background of shrubs—it was Sir Colin Middlemore.

"I saw Craven at the station on his way to town, so I thought I would risk the chance of getting a peep at you," he said, as she joined him. "I have been thinking of you all day long, and wondering how I could manage a *tête-à-tête*. The fates have been kind to me for once in a way."

As she nestled in her lover's arms, and felt his kisses on her lips, the fierce tumult of her spirit calmed. Worthless as she knew this man to be—ready to cast her off the moment his fancy tired of her, she still loved him with all the wild strength of her nature, and to feel that she had succeeded in reawakening those fires of passion, that absence had done a good deal towards quenching, was joy itself.

"I have to go up to town myself to-morrow," he said, presently, "so I shan't see you again for a few days."

She raised her head and looked at him as if struck by a sudden thought.

"I wonder if you would do a commission for me in London?"

"As many as you like, provided they don't entail too many parcels."

"Oh, this is quite a simple thing—only a prescription I want you to get made up for me. Shall I make a confession? It is a wash for the face, and as I am vain enough to want to keep my complexion, I use it occasionally. Are you shocked?"

Middlemore laughed with amusement.

"Oh, heavens, no! It would take a good deal more than that to shock me. Besides, I take it for granted women try all the means they can to improve their appearance, and so long as they succeed in looking beautiful, what does it matter to men how they achieve it?"

She took a paper from her purse, neatly folded, and gave it him.

"Be sure you bring the prescription back to me. It is that of a celebrated physician, and I would not lose it on any consideration. Get it made up to-morrow, and carefully packed, and send it me by parcel post."

He promised obedience, and a couple of days later the package arrived.

Meanwhile Clarice was trying her best to overcome the presentiment of evil that had taken hold of her, and to that she attributed her loneliness now that Lennox was gone. She and Sybil drove and walked together in the daytime, but it was in the evening that the young wife felt her solitude the most. She had had a hurried note from her husband posted en route, and a wire from Milan saying he had arrived there. After that, the letters ceased, and five days had now elapsed since his departure. On the sixth morning she and Sybil were seated together in the library, reading, when a card was brought to her with a few words pencilled on it.

"Can I see you at once, and alone?"

The writing was that of Palce, the detective. Clarice made some excuse for sending her companion away, and a minute later Palce was ushered in.

There was something in the man's appearance that instantly arrested Clarice's attention. It was not that he looked ill, although his face was pale, but he seemed nervous and uneasy, and if the idea had not been so absurd, she would have thought he was actually frightened. Disregarding her invitation to seat himself, he remained standing near the table, twisting his felt hat round and round between his fingers, while he looked at her hesitatingly.

"You have news for me, Mr. Palce?"

"Well, ma'am, I have; but they are such that I don't care for the task of giving them to you. Look here, Mrs. Craven," he added, with the air of one who whips a flagging resolution, "I'm a poor man, and two hundred pound is two hundred pound, but if you'll take my advice you won't stir hand or foot further in the matter of your father's death. Let sleeping dogs lie—that's the best thing you can do, and though I go against my own interest in telling you so, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I've done for you what I should wish others to do for my own daughter—given you the best advice in my power."

He took out a red handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his brow, while Clarice gazed at him in increasing amazement. His tone and manner both mystified her, but she was not in the least inclined to take his advice. There was indeed a trace of hauteur in her voice as she answered him.

"You are very good, Mr. Palce; but this is a case in which it is necessary to exercise my own judgment, and having once put my hand to the plough, there is no turning back. I have employed you to trace out the murderer, and it is your duty to give me the results of your inquiry."

"I know that, and yet, and yet—" He stopped and gazed at her helplessly, as if he did not know how to proceed. "Is your mind quite made up, ma'am?" he burst forth, at last.

"Quite"—was her inflexible answer.

The man put his hat down, and with an air of resignation drew out a pocket-book, in which he had evidently made notes, but even yet he seemed disinclined to begin.

"Have you been able to trace the swords?" asked Clarice, a trifle impatiently.

"Yes; there was not much difficulty about that, for, as I told you, they were of a very peculiar make, and when I took them to an expert in London, he said they probably came from Florence. And he was right; they did come from Florence. After a few inquiries I found the shop where they were sold, and more than that, the man who sold them. He recognised them directly I showed them to him, for he said it was not often they had an order for two weapons exactly alike in every particular. They were sold last April twelvemonth, about a week before the death of Sir Alrick Chandos."

He paused, and Clarice drew a quick breath of excitement. Her colour came and went rapidly, and she bent forward as she said,—

"And the person he sold them to—who was it?"

"He did not know his name, but he described him to me, and said that he was an Englishman and was staying at the Hôtel Britannique. He was a gentleman, too, and his initials—which the shopkeeper chanced to see on his silver cigarette case—were L. C."

"L. C.," repeated Clarice, "What do they stand for?"

"That's what I had to find out," proceeded Palce, with a stealthy glance at her, "so I went to the Hôtel Britannique, and made inquiries again. Of course, those hotel-keepers keep a list of their visitors, and I discovered that the only Englishman with those initials who stayed there last April was—Mr. Lennox Craven."

"Lennox Craven—my husband!" exclaimed Clarice, utterly dumbfounded, but still quite unconscious of what the detective's manner meant. "What has that to do with it?"

"Everything, Mrs. Craven, for the description given me of the purchaser of the swords tallied in every respect with that of your husband—in fact, there cannot be a shadow of doubt that it was him."

Clarice fell back a step, and steadied herself by the back of a chair; a curious grey pallor overspread her face. She was beginning to see the drift of things now, but even yet their full horror had not reached her.

"But why should he buy the swords—what could he want with them?" she muttered, more to herself than to her companion.

"That is just what we had better not try to find out, ma'am," returned the detective, with a significant shake of his head.

Then it flashed upon her, and she turned to him with blazing eyes and quivering nostrils, beside herself with indignation.

"You dare to say it was my husband who was the murderer of my father—my husband who is the soul of honour, whose word is his bond, who is as incapable of such a crime as I am myself!" she stopped, literally choked by the violence of her emotion.

Palce shook his head sadly enough.

"I warned you ma'am—you can't say that I didn't warn you. You would have the truth, and I could do no less than give it you. All you say of Mr. Craven may be correct enough, but all the same—twas he as did it."

"You lie!" she cried, fiercely.

"I wish I did ma'am, for your sake, but facts are too strong to be contradicted. Why on earth Mr. Craven ever let you begin this inquiry I can't think. One would have thought he'd have tried his best to prevent it."

Tried his best to prevent it! Why that was exactly what he had done, poor Clarice thought to herself, as she recalled her husband's impressive words on the occasion of the detective's last visit. Lennox had certainly done his utmost in endeavouring to persuade her, but she had refused to be persuaded. So far, Palce's words were confirmed.

"Where is Mr. Craven now?" demanded the man, as if struck by a sudden thought.

"He has gone to Italy."

"To Italy! Ah, no doubt he thought he'd be beforehand with me. But," added Palce, with a complacent chuckle, "when I once put my shoulder to the wheel I don't let the grass grow under my feet, and the minute I got your cheque



"HOW DO I LOOK, LENNOX?" SHE SAID AS SHE PAUSED AND GLANCED UP INTO HER HUSBAND'S FACE.

ashed, I was off. So I expect by this time he finds himself forestalled."

The words fell on Clarice's heart like lead. Her quickened brain recalled the hurried and secret departure of Lennox's confidential servant, who had doubtless gone to Italy on his master's business. What did it mean, oh, what did it mean!

"It is not true—it cannot be true!" she cried, in a sort of wail. "It is some hideous mistake which Lennox would explain in a minute if he were here. Oh, I must send for him—now, at once."

She would have left the room had not the detective put a detaining hand on her arm.

"For Heaven's sake, ma'am, stay where you are! You don't want all the world to know your husband's secret. One incautious word of yours now might do the whole mischief. When do you expect Mr. Craven to return?"

"He may come to-morrow, or the next day; he said he should not be long away. He has gone to look after his servant, who was injured in an accident at Milan."

"At Milan! Ah! that explains why no effort had been made to get that shopman to hold his tongue. Of course he would have done it if he had been bribed sufficiently. I see how it happened exactly. And now, I dare say, Mr. Craven has gone on to Florence, and finds he is too late."

There was a terrible plausibility in the detective's reasoning; even Clarice felt it. She made a desperate effort to find a flaw in it.

"And suppose my husband did buy the swords, it does not follow that it was he who threw them into the pond at Sunningdale."

"Wait until you have heard the rest of my story, Mrs. Craven. You may recollect that, after the murder, I found the marks of footsteps on the banks of the pond, and that I had a cast taken of them. The print was evidently that of a tall man, with a particularly narrow foot, but with a slight enlargement of the toe-joint. Well,

as it happened, I knew the name of Mr. Craven's bootmaker in London; for when I was here last I chanced to see a parcel lying on the hall-table, which had just come by post—no doubt a pair of new boots; and on my way from the Continent, as I passed through town, I called at the shoemaker's, and by means of an invented message contrived to see one of a pair of shoes that had been sent up to be mended; the last would have served my turn, but the boot itself was better, for I could try it in the model of my cast. It fitted exactly."

"Many men have the same sized foot;" but, even as Clarice said this, she was conscious how weak it sounded, and she stopped.

"The same sized foot, but not the same shape, the same width, the same peculiarities," returned the detective, shrewdly. "Oh, no, Mrs. Craven, the proof is conclusive enough, so far as we have gone. And now the question is—shall we go on?"

She did not answer his question. In her heart she still repudiated all idea of Lennox's connection with the murder; but her mind travelled swiftly over these events of the past few weeks. Suddenly she remembered her discovery in her husband's bureau of the revolver with her father's monogram on it; the revolver that she felt sure she had seen lying on his table in the Tower Chamber at Sunningdale. This naturally brought to her recollection the wig and beard. Was it possible that Lennox had worn these as a disguise on the night of the murder?

Then the truth burst upon her like an inspiration, explaining that vague familiarity of voice and feature that had struck her when she saw him for the first time at Lady Fairfax's, but the impression of which had worn off since. The man who had rescued her in her somnambulant trance and her husband were one and the same!

It came upon her with such overwhelming conviction that she did not for a moment question it. And this proved beyond a doubt that Craven had been at Sunningdale Court on the night of

the murder; indeed, had not the coroner's jury brought in a verdict of wilful murder against him at the time!

Poor Clarice's brain whirled. The conclusion forced upon her was maddening. She started up and threw out her arms in piteous appeal.

"Lennox, Lennox! why are you not here to set these awful doubts at rest—to clear up the mystery, and prove yourself innocent!" she cried, in quivering tones of anguish.

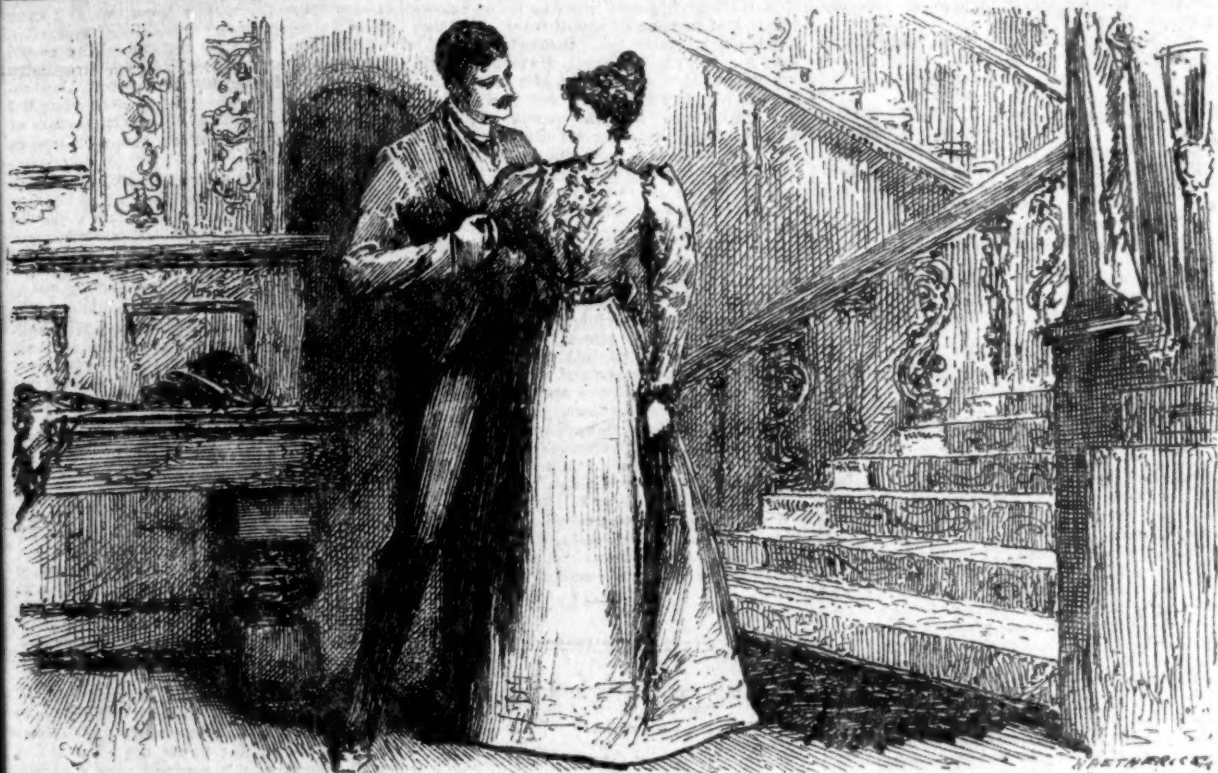
The answer came in Craven's own voice,—

"I am here, my beloved!"

(To be continued.)

VEGETABLE gems are among the queer things found in the Philippines. There are not enough of them, though, to encourage a mad rush in that direction. The bamboo is empty normally. One might cut open a jungle of the giant grass and find unaltered hollowness. But once in a million times or more accident brings to light in the bamboo stem a gem; nature has moulded into a lump a little of the flinty material which makes the outer stem so hard. The nodule usually presents the appearance of an opal, and several specimens are in the museums which reproduce the characteristic lines of that gem. These nodules are known as tabaccer. The milk in the coconut is generally considered its only contents. The really ripe nut, however, is filled with a white spongy mass, rich in the finest oil which the nut produces. This sponge is exposed to the hot sun for two or three days in a wooden trough until thoroughly palped. The last of the oil is then extracted by squeezing the soft sponge in the hands. Very rarely this careful handling has developed the presence of small spheres which have much of the lustre of the pearl. Eight or ten of these coconut pearls, all discovered in the Philippines, are treasured in European museums. They range from the size of a pin-head to that of a very small pea.





"AND YOU, MY JOCELYN, MUST FORGET EVERYTHING BUT THAT YOUR TROUBLES ARE OVER!" SAID HUNTLEY.

## JOCELYN DE BURGH.

—30—

### CHAPTER XXIX.

#### THE CONFESSION OF ALICIA DE BURGH.

"How do you know all this!"

Richard's face was nearly as pinched as Alicia's; at the sound of his broken voice, that had been pitiless, she unclosed her eyes and stared at him, glowing even now on his pain.

"Know?" she cried. "Hugo saw his old governess, Miss Barry, about a year ago, with a girl who looked so like Gilbert's that he came to tell me, to ask me if it could be Richard's child. I sent him time and again to Miss Barry, to cajole her into telling who the girl was, or to send her to us; but she stuck to her bargain, she sent the girl away, and but for a mere chance we should never have seen her. Hugo made certain she was Richard's child. Then he looked everywhere for her, and all the time she was here, come under a false name, to spy."

"I came by accident, because I wanted to get out of going to the Warden School, because Martha let out my name was de Burgh, and it seemed a chance to get to my own people," Jocelyn said, quickly, but her lips trembled.

"I know how you came," evilly. "but it doesn't matter. Ever since you have been in this house things have been going against me. They have gone against me all my life, but I never was beaten before. I would not be beaten now if my heart had not died with my Hugo." She beat her hands on the coverlet.

"I've fought all my life," she moaned. "I never gave in, I never repented. Not when I found I had hurt my back lifting the old man to throw him from the window, and grew into the helpless cripple I am. Not when I knew that I feared the dark in which I had killed him, and had lights burning night and day, so that the twilight could never creep on me and make me see that sight over again. You think I am an

old woman." She clutched Jocelyn's hand. "I am but fifty-seven. I tell you I have lived in hell for years." An awful shiver came over her.

"And it has been all for nothing," the dreary whisper more to herself than them. "They say Hugo is dead." She plucked with her fingers at the satin quilt.

Richard came a step nearer to her.

"And I!" he said, slowly. "Have I not suffered? But I would forgive you all, Alicia, all, if my wife had not died believing me a villain and mad. When you married my father I never thought again of the day you said you loved me. I never loved you. I loved in all my life but one woman, and she was married to a brute who had deserted her. When he died I married her. Martha has the papers that my wife gave her when she died. We kept it secret, because my wife wished it, because she wanted to live a quiet life and not come to Castle de Burgh. I was a fool to do it. I might have known you meant mischief. But here, before Heaven, I forgive you, as I pray He may forgive you blacker sins than I have against you." In the solemn silence Alicia laughed.

"I have confessed to spite Gilbert, not for your forgiveness!" she cried. "Do what you like now, hang me, tell it all abroad. For my son is dead."

Huntley stood by, his quick hand writing as she spoke.

"Sign this," he said, gently, "and don't speak like that. No one will hang you, and you have Gilbert left."

Alicia lifted her eyes to his, and her look was devilish.

"My son is dead," she said, after that long glance of unconquerable malice. "Give me the pen. But first write this."

"I, Alicia de Burgh, do swear before Heaven that I alone killed my husband, Henry de Burgh, by pushing him from an open window; that the story told by the witness Martha Hewitt is true, and would have been told at the trial but for me, who hurried the woman away by persuading

her that it was the only way to save Richard de Burgh, whom I falsely accused of the murder; through me he was proved to have done it, and to have been of unsound mind. This, my confession, I have caused to be written, not because I repent, but that Gilbert and Meyra de Burgh may know that they have no right to inherit the property."

She took the pen from Huntley, and slowly, laboriously, signed her name.

Her hand fell heavily on the quilt, she relinquished the pen.

"Take me up, Willie Huntley," she said, slowly, "and carry me to Hugo. You can come too," her black dull eyes turned on Jocelyn. "If I had known you before, I might—but it's all no matter."

Very deftly, Huntley stooped and folded the bedclothes round the cripple; as he lifted her, her emaciated face was yellow as wax against his shoulder, her eyes were purple round the lids. The gorgeous coverlet wrapped her like a sumptuous shroud, and Jocelyn followed with a heart full of pity.

Wicked as the woman was, she was strong in her wickedness. Who knew what she might have been if she had not loved, "not wisely but too well," till her heart learnt the worst bitterness that life holds?

They had laid Hugo de Burgh on his bed; the crimson wound in his throat was covered with white linen; his eyes some kindly hand had closed. Yet his dead face was dreadful. The white lips sneered still, as if in mockery. The fine, cruel hands were bruised and torn by the teeth of the great wolf-dog that had died to defend his master.

The doctor stood by the head of the bed. As Huntley came in, carrying the dead man's mother, he started, and waved him back.

"Take her away, Lord Huntley!" he cried, sharply. "The shock—she is not fit for it."

His quick eye, as he came forward hastily, noted the bang of Alicia's head on Huntley's

shoulder, the lax arm that drooped over the gorgeous trailing coverlet.

"Poor soul. Poor soul!" he said, almost absent. "I thought as much."

Huntley looked down at his burden.

"What do you mean?" he cried.

"Mrs. de Burgh is dead," Dr. Maitland said, quietly. "This shock has done it, but for some time I have known it was not far off."

Huntley remembered how she had grown suddenly heavy in his arms as he walked. Very gently he laid her down beside the son whose dead face she would never look on, and straightened the rose and gold of her wrappings round her quiet limbs.

Mother and son had gone before a higher judge than humanity. Jocelyn de Burgh, whom they had wronged, fell on her knees beside the bed and prayed.

That night, when Moyra had cried herself to sleep, Jocelyn and Huntley talked long together. Together they determined that Moyra should never know what had been in that letter from Guy Meredith that the dead woman had never read.

"Guy will never tell her he wrote threatening Hugo with exposure, why should we? Let her be happy thinking he knows no more than she does," Huntley said.

For the letter had been but one more proof of Alicia's guilt.

Meredith's mother had written to him, begging him to give up Moyra, since she had thought for years that her grandmother murdered her husband, and lately had known she did.

A man who had been poaching was badly hurt in a fight with the Meredith keepers, and Mrs. Meredith had been sorry for him.

Day after day she had visited him in the infirmary of the jail, till at last he had asked her to bring a magistrate; he had something to tell before he died.

He had been hanging round Castle de Burgh, waiting to speak to a maid-servant who was his sweetheart, and was the first to pick up old Mr. de Burgh from the stones of the river that was shallow just there. And the old man had spoken,—

"Alicia—Alicia pushed me," he said, as he died. The poacher went to Alicia, and she laughed at him, but she paid his passage to Canada. He never went, for he was arrested for stealing, and he never told till he found he was dying. Then it weighed on him that he had left the innocent to suffer for the guilty. He made a deposition of all that he knew, and swore to it.

But he lived still, a breathing, sensible witness of Alicia's guilt, and it was this man's confession that Guy Meredith had written to Huntley, vaguely and threateningly, to Hugo.

"And me!" Jocelyn said, as Huntley stood up to say good-night to her.

"What do you mean?" he asked, abruptly, for she trembled as she faced him.

"I mean you had better let me go. I feel—I feel as if those two upstairs had died through me."

"They died through the visitation of God, with their sins on them," he answered, very gravely. "And you, my Jocelyn, must forget everything but that your troubles are over."

He took her gently to him.

"My brave love," he said, softly; "my brave, brave love!"

A year after things were changed indeed at Castle de Burgh.

The great house was shut up; there were none of them who would willingly live there. Certainly not Richard de Burgh, who had been cleared for ever of the stain on his name, pardoned by the Home Secretary for the crime he had never committed, and justice done to him at last!

Not Gilbert, who had married Molly Moore on his step-brother's generous allowance, and taken her to travel wherever she most longed to go. Not Moyra, who was so marry Guy Meredith in the spring, and lived now with Jocelyn.

For Jocelyn, her blue eyes bluer than ever, her lovely face sweet and untroubled, was Jocelyn de Burgh no longer, but Lady Huntley

of Holyrood. She was happy as she had never dreamed of happiness; and Richard de Burgh was happy at seeing her. Otherwise the man's heart was weary in his breast. He longed greatly for the day that should take him to that first Jocelyn, who had loved him and died thinking him a murderer. He lived quietly at a small house he had taken, near his daughter's grand one; and thought, as each day passed over his head, that it was one day gone from his long waiting, one day less to the time when he should meet his love and see in her clear eyes that in Heaven, she knew!

Miss Barry lived still in the dingy London house, hard and iron-grey still. She had never even thawed when Jocelyn had gone to her, and thanked for her care, begged her pardon for having thought hardly of her. She had never liked her. She did not pretend liking now; but there were tears in her old eyes as she told Richard de Burgh how she had kept her word to his wife. For Richard had always known the way to the cold woman's heart.

But Miss Barry lived without Martha. Martha, who kept house for her beloved Mr. Richard, and would till death claim her, a "very faithful servant, to shine as doth the day."

And the real Jane Brown!

Was made happy with a school of her own, till in after days she married well and happily. But she and the sham Jane Brown have never met since they parted in the ladies' carriage at Chester.

[THE END.]

## REGINALD KERSON'S SECRET.

—20—

(Continued from page 7.)

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### THE MARBLE CROSS.

"AND what is it aunt's has been saying which has made my little one look so sad?" he asked, as the door closed behind the ladies, and drawing Elsie towards him, he gazed lovingly on her upturned face.

"What it was your wish that I should know," she answered; and then he knew that she had learnt the sad story of his life.

"And you are still willing to take me, Elsie?" he asked, whilst he looked wistfully into her velvety eyes; but before answering him,

"Is she still alive?" she asked.

"No, Elsie, no!" was the reply. "Poor Florrie went to her long account on that night when on the hill-side, amid the dying and the dead, I looked on her for the last time. Had I known she lived I should never have told you of the love which had grown in my heart. You remember, dear, the day we started for Devonshire, and how, through me, we missed the train! It was then that I knew she was still alive. She was on the platform when I was selecting some papers at the bookstall, and advancing to where I was standing, begged me, in the name of Heaven, to speak to her. At first I told her it was impossible, but to her further entreaty and fearing to attract attention, I at last agreed, when retiring to where we could converse unnoticed, I asked her to be brief, as friends were awaiting my return.

"It is to ask your forgiveness," she said, 'that I have begged to speak to you!'

"It is too late to do that," I answered. 'I thought—indeed I hoped,' I added, falteringly, 'that our miserable lives were severed for ever—that you were—'

"Dead!" she said, finishing the sentence for me. 'Oh, Heaven! I wish I was!' and she looked so utterly miserable that for the moment my heart bled for her.

"Yes," she went on, 'I wanted you to believe me so, and had the paragraph inserted to that effect that the same might be forwarded to you!'

"To what end?" I asked.

"That you might, if you chose, take a wife

more worthy of you than I was, which I knew whilst I lived you never would," she returned.

"But you are Lady Ingelton. Why should you give a thought to me?" I said, sarcastically.

"It was all I could do," she answered, 'in reparation of the great wrong I had done you; but if to know that my life now is one long season of misery and regret will satisfy you, your revenge is complete!'

"I looked up as she spoke, and indeed there were lines on her beautiful face which told but too plainly that in that, at least, she spoke the truth, whilst her eyes became suffused with tears.

"Lord Ingelton, your husband, is he not kind then?" I ventured.

"Hush! I hate him!" was her reply, and then she turned, leaving me where I was, dimly guessing to where, in the distance I saw her rejoin his lordship, and leaning on his arm after a few moments she again passed me; but the former never noticed my presence, whilst the ripple of her laughter, forced though I knew it to be, was the last sound that fell on my ears.

"And you never saw her from then till she was killed in the accident?" Elsie asked.

"Yes, dear, when we were on the beach at Ilfracombe," was the response, and then the latter knew his wife and the beautiful woman who had discovered weeping so bitterly over her aunt's coffin were one and the same.

A servant then entering to say that supper was ready, and the ladies were waiting them in the dining room, they were quickly aroused from the reverie into which both had fallen, whilst they became sensible of a chilliness, the fire having burnt so low as to be scarcely perceptible.

"I will not stay longer," Reginald said, in answer to Miss Sarah's entreaty that he would stop at the Manor till the morning. "My house-keeper will be waiting up for me, and as it is late of knowing now, if you will allow me I will say good-night at once," and a few moments later, after tenderly kissing Elsie, telling her he should call and take her for a walk in the morning, he went out into the bitter cold.

As the door closed behind him the latter went to the window, from which she could see his dark figure in the bright moonlight, until in the distance it became lost in the woods beyond, and a short time after her glossy head was resting on the snowy pillow of her little bed, dreaming of a happy future with him who was so dear to her.

And Reginald, thoughtful, and feeling happier than he had done for years, moved on over the trackless waste of untrodden snow on which the moon shone in all her brilliancy, bathing lawn and copse in her effulgent ray—the little village church beyond, around which the graves of the dead showed in peaceful quietude.

Not a sound was audible, the crushing of the frozen snow beneath his feet the only break in the surrounding stillness.

Taking his way through the churchyard, as being the nearest to his destination, he went on dreaming of the girl with whom he looked forward to spend a life of happiness to which he had been a stranger so long, when he became conscious of something he had never seen before in the midst of the silent tombs surrounding him.

It was a cross of pure white marble, marking the last resting-place of one who, in worldly goods, had been more favoured than the rest; and an indefinable impulse leading him to the spot, he read in the light, as clear as day, which fell on the golden letters, the name of the girl who had thrown such a shadow over his early life; but as the pure stone seemed to speak to him but of the time when, spotless as itself, she had come to him in the freshness of her youth and beauty, for a moment he let his hand rest lovingly on the roses which, as a wreath, entwined the holy symbol, and then with his eyes filled with tears he arose, and his own voice caused him to start; it sounded so cold, so sepulchral, where all else was so still, as saying,—

"How came it here?"

He rose to his feet, and then great beads of perspiration fell from his forehead as the answer



came when least expected, and the words, "By my desire!" fell on his ear.

He turned to whence the sound proceeded, to find he was not the sole visitor to that lone churchyard, and then he saw standing close to the place he had but just quitted, with his arms folded across his breast, the man who had so embittered his youth, the enemy of his life—Lord Ingleton.

The temptation to spring on him and strangle him where he stood was his first impulse; but as the pure white cross arose between them, a better, a holier feeling took possession of his breast; and, as though her spirit arose in meditation, Reginald's hand dropped to his side, whilst he gazed in sorrow alone on the man before him.

"I know what is in your heart, Reginald Kerson," the other said: "and if my life would atone for the past, it is yours. All that I lived for lies there," and he pointed to the grave, around which the snow-wreaths had gathered. "It was her wish to be brought to Singlethorpe, and only to see that the stone I had sent from London had been placed according to my directions am I here. To-morrow I shall be away early. It is such a one as she would have liked, don't you think so?" he asked, sadly.

"And you really loved her?" Reginald said, whilst a sudden pity for the man who stood there in his great sorrow filled his breast.

"Better than life," he answered, with a grief he could not control. He clung to the stone tablet, lovingly caressing the flowers drooping, as she had drooped, in their full beauty.

It was only a moment, when, as though he regretted the weakness which had overcome him,—

"Good-night," he said. "I am going now. We were friends once! Will you take my hand for the last time?"

He had held it out tremulously, fearing the result.

But Reginald grasped it in his own.

"May Heaven forgive you!" he answered. "I do!"

And then they parted—parted over the grave of her whom both had loved so madly!

### CONCLUSION.

LITTLE more remains to be told. Again it is spring-time, and the Singlethorpe woods resound with the songs of the feathered minstrels.

The Misses Mungrove are seated in the same room as when our tale commenced, and very happy they look; whilst Elsie, who now forms the trio, is urging a point which, by the expression on the faces of the elder ladies, she will evidently gain.

"Well, my darling!" Miss Sarah says at last, "it shall be as you wish, though I did say your mother should never enter the Manor again; but we must forget and forgive!"

And so Edward's wife was forgiven the act (which, in her sisters'-in-law eyes amounted to a crime) of marrying again, an invitation being at once sent off that she would be present herself at her daughter's wedding.

There was quite a sensation in the Singlethorpe village when the latter took place, a triumphal arch being erected under the supervision of the village carpenter, from which to the church itself were strewn flowers by the white-robed children of the village school, as the bells rang out a joyous peal, and Elsie, leaning on the arm of Captain Kerson, emerged from the sacred edifice.

Ten years have sped their course since then, and Elsie, with her husband and eight-year son, have taken up their abode at the Manor, for Aunt Eleanor is alone now, and she says their young voices are all that remain to her of happiness.

[THE END.]

## HER FATHER'S SECRETARY.

—32—

### CHAPTER XXIX.

"MABEL was so sure that I would fulfil my part of the agreement," continued Gwen, "that she sent in the announcement of the double wedding to all the society papers, and now I ask you, Rupert, what is to be done?"

His face was very pale. He rose hurriedly and paced nervously up and down the length of the luxurious drawing-room.

"She should have consulted me on such an important step," he said, with much agitation.

"She thought my will was your law, Rupert," Gwen answered, huskily, "and fully believed I would be only too pleased to carry out my promise, and that the reminder of it, seeing it in the papers, would quite delight me."

"True, I had forgotten to look at it in that light," he said. "I could only think of one thing, and that was the disrespect it would be showing to my poor little Gladys's memory to permit the marriage to take place so soon after her terrible death."

Gwen rose quickly to her feet and looked at him steadily.

"Would you cause me the shame of having it postponed?" she asked, huskily, adding: "Remember, no one hereabouts knows of your ill-starred marriage with Gladys Barton. It is needless to remind you that I have all the pride of the Melvilles, and that it would kill me to be made the subject of idle gossip, which would assuredly be the case if—"

With a great burst of soba she broke down utterly, hiding her face in her hands.

"If the marriage had to be postponed," he supplemented, quietly.

She nodded her dark, curly head in assent.

"Nothing shall ever be done to wound or grieve you if I can prevent it, Gwen," he said, gravely. "Do not weep—dry your tears, and let the wedding take place on the date mentioned, for a fate beyond our control seems to have willed it should be so."

When she had gained the privacy of her own room that afternoon, Gwen told herself that she was, indeed, a most clever girl.

She had certainly planned and executed successfully a most daring scheme. The real facts in the case were that Gwen had written to her friend upon hearing of her approaching wedding, begging that it might be a double affair, and take place at The Mount, three weeks from that date, and the young girl readily assented.

Gwen, herself, had sent the notices of the approaching wedding to the society papers.

She knew Rupert's nature well enough to readily foresee that if publicity was given to the event, stating that it was to take place on a certain day, Rupert would readily acquiesce.

Three weeks would pass by quickly enough with Rupert by her side, and then good-bye to the old life! She would marry Rupert, and induce him to live abroad.

She built wonderful air-castles of how she would defy Marie to do her worst, if the girl should ever trace her and dare come to her. She would keep the distance of the whole country between Rupert and his mother, that she might not be eternally dining in his ears the praises of Gladys. She hated the name of Gladys as she had hated the sweet-faced girl who had borne it.

Rupert could not find it in his heart to refuse Gwen when she urged so persistently that he should remain at The Mount until the ceremony took place. He found the days hanging long and tedious on his hands, and he wondered how he would pass his life-time with Gwen when he found a fortnight with her so tiresome. Besides, there was plenty of diversity in the way of amusement, for The Mount was always thronged with merry guests.

Rupert was not a young man who was demonstrative in his affection. He was now all that attentive to Gwen, anticipating her every want, and constantly by her side; but those who watched him keenly noticed there was certainly a

lack of true love in his heart toward the beautiful girl whom he was so soon to make his bride.

His eyes never brightened when she entered the room, and they never followed her—as a lover's eyes are wont to do—when she left it. He was never jealous or impatient, no matter how long she talked with gentlemen, nor did he seem to be the least concerned as to how many smiles she gave them. They wondered, curiously, how a girl like dark-eyed Gwendolen Melville could have chosen so cold a lover.

Her idolatrous love was certainly patent enough to everyone. The girl seemed to live only in his presence. All her brightness, her gaiety and smiles seemed to fall from her when he left her.

Her girl friends spoke of it among themselves with wonder.

"It is not right to idolise a man after that fashion," they would declare; and they felt sorry for Gwen.

They all knew how devotedly Rupert Dane had loved the lawyer's lovely daughter when he was only her father's secretary, and they quite believed it must be the newly-acquired wealth which had caused such a change in him. How little they knew of the man's heart—how few were wearing itself out for love of the one he had lost, and that even in his sleep he would often eagerly call upon a name, and that name was—Gladys.

Yes; they felt sorry for Gwen, and they speculated as to what she would ever do if she were to lose him. What a pity that he could not love her as she loved him!

The group of girls who had been discussing the matter had entered the drawing-room, indulged in their little gossip half an hour or more, and then passed out. They had imagined themselves talking in the strictest privacy, and not one of them dreamed of looking behind the heavy silken portières that screened the bay-window looking out upon the lawn.

Had they done so, they would have seen a white-faced girl leaning heavily against the marble fluted pillar. It was Gwendolen Melville.

"Everyone sees, everyone knows that he does not love me," she moaned; "but I never knew that his coldness to me was becoming public talk. Ah, pitying Heaven! is there any fate more cruel than to love deeply, passionately, with all the strength of one's heart and soul, and not be loved in return? And yet, for all that, I would rather be his wife, though he abhorred me, than be the bride of any other man, though he placed the wealth of the whole world at my feet."

The days flew quickly by, and at length the night preceding Gwen's wedding-day arrived.

The Mount was filled with guests, for the marriage was to take place early the following forenoon.

One by one the lights from the many windows had gone out, and one by one the guests had sunk to sleep, but one figure never stirred from its place by the window, though the clock in an adjacent belfry had long since pealed the midnight hour. It was Gwen.

She threw up the sash and leaned her hot, flushed face far out into the night winds.

A sudden temptation came to her to leave her room and go out into the grounds, late as the hour was, and bid good-bye to the trees and flowers she had loved so well.

She was going away on the morrow. Would she ever again see them with the moonlight shining upon them?

Gwen caught up a thin scarf, wound it about her head, and hurried silently through the darkened house out into the shadowy grounds.

Some impulse she could hardly account for drew her out of her way down to the beech-walk. How dark and gloomy it looked down that dim avenue of bending trees, whose branches, rocked by the sobbing night winds, swayed dimly to and fro!

"I have played under their shade, a light-hearted, merry child; I have walked with Rupert in those days when he loved me so well—a happy girl; and I shall pass down this avenue to-morrow leaning upon his arm—his bride."

"I shall try to commence life all over again from the hour that we are wed. I shall try to blot out, if it lies within human power, that one awful scene that has haunted me day and night."

CHRONIC INDIGESTION and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "Docron" (purely vegetable), 2/6, from Chemists; 1/-, post free from Dr. Hogg, "Glandower," Bournemouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.

My flesh creeps even now when I think of it! How horrible that the memory of it should be so strong upon me to night!

"I have asked myself over and over again if I am sorry, and I cannot answer 'No,' for had it not happened I should never have been Rupert Dane's bride! No, I cannot say that I regret it, for it will gain me at last the love of the only man on earth I could ever care for. I—"

The sentence was never finished, for Gwen had come suddenly across a dark figure seated upon one of the benches—the figure of a woman!

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" Gwen demanded, stopping short.

The dark figure turned slowly towards her, and the moonlight fell full upon her face.

"Good Heaven!" shrieked Gwen, with a wild cry. "It is a ghost—the ghost of Gladys!"

### CHAPTER XXX

THE dark figure rose slowly and approached her.

"Hush! unless you would alarm the whole household," said a voice that was decidedly human. "I am not a ghost; I am indeed Gladys!"

"Gladys could not come back from the Black Pool!" cried Gwen, in awful terror. "I saw her go down and the black waters close over her."

"That was your will, Gwendolen Melville," returned the other, solemnly. "But Heaven willed differently. You would have committed a terrible crime had I died in the dark water into which you thrust me, you are saved from the responsibility of an awful sin deliberately planned. I have come here to-night to save you from committing on the morrow another and as great a sin—that of marrying a man who has a living wife. I have travelled foot-sore many a weary mile to tell you that I—poor, despised, heart-broken Gladys—am Rupert Dane's wedded wife!"

After the first great shock, Gwen grew suddenly brave. She realised with a thrill of rage that this was indeed Gladys in the flesh.

Before she had time to utter the words that sprang to her lips, the girl went on, huskily,—

"I was just about to tell you this at that fatal moment when you struck me down with so cowardly a blow."

"I wish I had killed you!" cried Gwen, frantically. "I am loth to believe my own eyesight in seeing you standing here when I saw you go down into the dark water."

"Let me tell you how I was saved," said Gladys, slowly, "and after I have told you all, permit me to implore you to let me see my—my husband just one little minute, then he can go out of my life—for ever!"

"Whatever he may have been to you, Rupert Dane is not your husband now!" cried Gwen, triumphantly. "I will tell you what will be news to you, perhaps; Rupert has secured a decree of divorce from you. When search was made for you and you could not be found, it was readily given him for—your abandonment."

"And you, knowing the truth, let that infamous wrong go on?" inquired Gladys, looking at her beautiful, defiant rival with sad, tear-wet eyes.

"What was your memory or your reputation worth to me?" retorted Gwen, fiercely.

"True, I had forgotten that," returned the other.

"And as you are nothing—living or dead—to Rupert Dane, I now order you from these grounds. Go your way! He would spurn you from him if you were to seek him!" cried Gwen, hotly.

"I do not believe in breaking the bonds that Heaven imposes upon those who take upon themselves the solemn marriage vows. In the sight of Heaven I am his wife—though but a wife in name only—and will be his wife until death claims me."

"Your faith in your power of claiming a man who has learned to abhor you is very strong," sneered Gwen. "But you will soon find out you

have made a mistake, and a glaring one, in daring to come here on such an errand."

"I shall never leave these grounds until after I have seen and spoken with my—my husband!" declared the girl, in a low, steady voice.

Even in the dim light Gladys could see how white Gwen's face grew, and how the fire flashed in her dark, merciless, glaring eyes.

The memory came to Gwen as she stood there facing Gladys, how she had lured the girl at night to the Black Pool, and there taunted her with how little Rupert Dane cared for her, of the light words he spoke of her; and last, but by no means least, how Rupert had vowed only that evening that he loved herself—Gwen—and only endured the presence of Gladys because it was forced upon him, and that he had only been lent to Gladys as it were, and that he thought it was about time the farce ended.

"I cannot, I will not believe that!" Gladys had cried, beating the air with her little white hands. "I will ask him to-night when I return to the house."

"You shall not—you must not!" Gwen had expostulated, in a flight.

"I will!" sobbed Gladys. "I shall not be taunted by the words 'my lover was only lent to me' any longer. He must choose between you and me, Gwendolen Melville, and I shall tell him so."

In the height of her ungovernable rage at this, she had turned and struck Gladys on the face with her clenched white hand, and the girl fell a senseless heap at her feet. The ground was steep just there, and ere she could spring forward to prevent the awful calamity, Gladys had rolled into the waters of the Black Pool, and she distinctly saw the waters close over the white terrified face. With a shriek of mortal terror, Gwen had wheeled around and fled from the spot, never pausing until, panting and gasping, she reached her own room, and there fell in a deep swoon to the floor.

But how did Gladys escape the horrible death that seemed at the time inevitable? Gwen's intense curiosity got the better of her rage and hatred.

"I—I did not mean to push you into the pool," she faltered, hoarsely, adding, in a shivering breath: "How did you escape? Who saved you?"

"You did not wait to see," returned Gladys, sternly. "I will tell you."

"I dropped to the earth, stunned for an instant, when you struck me; but when I touched the water I revived and realized my horrible fate. I felt myself sinking—going down, down into the awful depths, and my heart went up in one wild prayer to the Maker who watches over those who have always trusted in Him. Then as suddenly I felt myself ascending. In an instant more I reached the surface of the pool, and my face cleared the black waters."

"Catch on to the willow boughs here and I will draw you out!" I heard some one shout. I did so, and the next instant a pair of stout hands began to draw me from the water. Then I heard broken exclamations in French, and even in the midst of my peril I recognized the voice of Marie, your maid. By almost herculean strength she drew me from the water, letting go her hold when she had dragged me a foot or so from the edge, and then, overcome by the great and terrible ordeal through which she had passed, she sank beside me in a deep swoon."

"I can only partly remember what passed after that. I crept away to get aid for her, and fell exhausted among the bushes. When she recovered she searched for me, calling out my name, and I tried to answer her, but the words died on my lips, leaving no sound."

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" she cried, wringing her hands frantically. "She has rolled back into the Black Pool again. My effort to save the poor thing was useless after all; and she turned from the pool and walked back to the house with an unsteady step."

How long I lay there I never knew. A day and a night must have passed. I was faint from hunger and thirst, and I realized that no one would ever come to search for me there. I tried to make my way back to the house, but

I must have wandered away in quite an opposite direction. Long days seemed to pass, and at length I found myself in a great cornfield, with the plying faces of two women bending over me.

"They took me to their home and cared for me, and there I hovered between life and death from that time until a week ago. I must have wandered many a mile from Clevedon, for when I awoke to consciousness and inquired for the place, they did not know where it was, but after much inquiry they found it. They also brought me the startling intelligence that the place was closed, that the master had gone away to wed a lovely bride, and that his mother had followed soon after to be present at the ceremony. I uttered no cry—no moan—though the intelligence almost killed me."

"That very day I set out for this place, and I am here at last, thank Heaven!"

"All I ask of you is this one favour, Gwendolen Melville; let me look upon Rupert's face for one moment—let me hear his voice, that was the sweetest music on earth to my ears, and then I will go quietly away and leave him to you. I do not care what becomes of me after that."

While Gladys had been speaking, a terrible plan had been forming in the brain of Gwen. When one takes the first step on the downward path of sin they find the path easy to traverse, and it was so with Gwen.

Standing there, she renewed the vow she had once taken—that even this girl's life should not stand between her and the one great goal of her ambition—that of being Rupert Dane's wife.

Only a few hours more and her hopes would have been realized. Would have been! Ah! they must be realized still, was the cry that welled up from her heart; and she knew full well that there would be an end to all her plans if Rupert Dane should see Gladys again.

She bent suddenly, and took Gladys' little cold hand.

"It is but natural that you should wish to see him again," she said, hoarsely. "The hour is late, but he is still in the library. Come with me, and—I will take you to him."

The pity of it was that poor Gladys believed her words, that she trusted one who had played her so falsely in the dark, dread past; but the girl's heart was guileless and trustful and she allowed Gwen to lead her toward the house.

There was no word of warning to her to beware as she crossed that fatal portal. Surely the girl's guardian angels, if they knew the fate in store for her, must have wept tears of pity for her.

### CHAPTER XXXI

THE midnight bell slowly tolled the solemn hour of twelve as the two dark figures stole silently through the corridors of the darkened and silent house.

"We will go to the library by the rear stairway, that we may not disturb the rest of the inmates," whispered Gwen, cautiously.

"You know best," murmured Gladys.

But when Gwen ascended the third stairway, the girl paused, drawing back in wonder.

"I thought you said that Rupert—that he was in the library," she faltered.

"We have fitted up the large round room in the tower for a summer reading-room," returned Gwen in a hoarse, constrained voice, adding, "It is cooler and pleasanter there. Rupert always prefers taking his books and papers there."

Gladys made no further objection, and followed Gwen blindly and silently, until they stood at length before the great oaken door, of the tower.

"He is in there," said Gwen. "Enter alone."

Gladys reached forth her hand timidly, and turned the heavy iron knob. Ah, me! how hard it was to turn it!

It seemed to her as though the lock was rusty, for it took the united strength of both hands to force the door open.



Instead of the flood of light and the beloved face she had expected to see, she found herself in utter darkness, and at that instant, she was pushed violently forward, and with lightning-like rapidity the heavy door swung to after her with a dull thud.

A cry of terror broke from Gladys' lips.

"Gwen!" she cried, groping frantically for the door again—"Gwen, the door has blown to. There is no one here. The room is in utter darkness!"

A laugh so horrible that it made Gladys' heart stop beating, and the blood turn to ice in her veins, answered her through the keyhole.

"You have been neatly trapped!" cried Gwen, in a fiendish voice that sounded scarcely human to the horrified girl within, who listened like one turned to stone. "You have been cleverly duped, I say. Did I not tell you that if you persisted in coming between me and the man I love I would find a means of putting you out of the way forever? I told you that as we stood on the brink of the Black Pool, and you would not heed me then. I told you the same to-night in the rose arbour, and you vowed you would see him again, and in forewarning me thus, you took your fate into your own hands."

"You shall not come between me and my marriage with Rupert Dane to-morrow. While it is taking place, you will be a close prisoner here, and you will remain here until death releases you, be that time long or short. No one will ever find you here," continued Gwen, in the same pitiless voice. "Your cries, should you waste your strength in that pastime, will never penetrate the thick walls. You are as completely shut off from the outside world as though you were in your tomb, and such it will be soon enough. When you hear the bells chiming in the adjacent bellfries to-morrow noon, you can realize what they are ringing for—it will be to celebrate my marriage with Rupert Dane."

"Good-bye, Gladys Barton, or Gladys Dane, or whatever you choose to call yourself," the mocking voice went on, "for we shall never meet again!"

A key turned in the rusty lock from the outside, there was the sound of rapidly retreating footsteps, then all was silent as the grave, and Gladys knew that Gwendolen Melville had indeed deserted her.

She tried to cry out, but all power of speech seemed to have suddenly deserted her. Then there was a sound as of rushing, roaring waters in her ears, and the girl knew no more. She had sunk to the floor in a deep swoon.

It was long hours ere Gladys gained consciousness again. She struggled to her feet, gazing around her in utter bewilderment, trying to realize where she was.

The knowledge came to her all too soon.

Like a flash, as her eyes rested on her surroundings, memory returned to her.

Ah! surely Gwen had not meant her terrible threat of leaving her there to die. No woman living in an enlightened world, with a heart in her bosom, could be so heartrendingly cruel.

With a terrified cry Gladys sprang to the door. Surely Gwen had left it unlocked. With both hands she grasped the knob and frantically endeavored to dash open the door. But it was useless, worse than useless, and she realized with horror that it was firmly fastened—locked upon the outside!

Wild, piercing cries broke from Gladys' lips for help; but no help came to her. She tore at the great iron lock until her slender white fingers were bruised and bleeding; but it would not yield.

At length she sank down upon her knees, crying out that it was indeed true that Gwendolen Melville had lured her there—to die!

This thought almost frenzied Gladys. By the dim light of a small, crescent-shaped pane of glass set close to the ceiling she could distinguish faintly the objects about her, and she frantically set about to discover some means of escape.

How well she remembered now what she had not thought of before—that long ago the windows of the tower had been bricked up to keep out the owls that always succeeded in breaking the panes

and making their homes in there, making life hideous to the inmates of the house by their wild cries and screeches, and on that account that part of the house had been gradually deserted, even by the servants, and it had fallen into disuse, save as a receptacle for odds and ends of furniture and bric-a-brac, over which the dust lay white and thick.

As Gladys stood there, with face white as death, gazing about her at the thought of the story of poor Genevieve, the poor, hapless, beautiful young bride, fabled in song and story, who had met just such a tragic death as the one that was to be meted out to her, and the very thought of it filled her with terror.

Suddenly the chiming of far-off bells smote upon her ear, and she remembered Gwen's parting, taunting words:

"When you hear the bells chiming they will be chiming for my wedding."

And as Gladys listened, pangs more bitter than death swept through her heart, and she buried her face in her hands, bursting into passionate tears.

By the time the bells stopped ringing, would Gwen be Rupert Dane's wife?

The law had parted them, but she would rather have heard the tidings of his death than of his marriage with Gwen.

So many worshipped the proud, beautiful heiress, why could she not have chosen some of these and leave Rupert alone? If wealth had never come to him, the haughty heiress would never have wanted Rupert, while she—ah, pitying Heaven!—she could have loved him through the direst poverty with all the strength of heart and soul.

Why had not Heaven given her the one thing for which she had prayed, as few women pray, from the moment she had looked upon the handsome, winning face that had been her loadstar ever since, even though at that time he was Gwen's lover?

When their eyes met in that first glance, in that moment she had felt the force of the magnetic attraction that is always sure to come to two hearts that Heaven intended for each other; in that instant her heart seemed to awaken rudely from a deep sleep, and something stirred the depths of the girl's soul with a pleasure so great it had been almost pain, and the subtle touch of the firm white hand that he held out to her had sent a thrill through all her being.

She had loved him from that moment, and would love him until the hour her eyes closed in death, and her last prayer would be that she might be laid to rest near where he might sometimes pass.

Again the chiming of bells pealed out, then suddenly ceased. Were they wedded? Ah, pitying angels! she loved him so well, it was a wonder that her heart did not break with the anguish the thought brought her.

She tried to picture the scene—Gwen in her bridal robes, clinging to his arm, looking up into the face that would look so smilingly down into hers.

"I cannot bear it," sobbed Gladys, wildly. "The very thought drives me to madness!"

She looked back to that other marriage, and contrasted it with this. What a pale, terrified, timid little bride she had been, standing by Rupert's side before the feeble old minister who had joined them together, "until death did them part," as he had said.

The weird scene had hardly seemed real to her, as leaning pale and weak against his strong, tender form, she stood out in the sunshine with Rupert.

"Gladys, my little wife," he had said, stopping short in the path, raising her face with his hand, and looking laughingly down into her eyes and at her painfully flushed face.

"It seems like some strange, awful dream, Rupert," she had sobbed. "Are you sure it is real?"

"You must not use the words 'awful dream,' Gladys," he had said, gravely, reprovingly, "say rather that it seems like a strange, sweet dream. Yes, you are my wife. Are you pleased?"

She could not have answered him to have saved her life. Surely the question was needless.

Could he not see the love-light on her face, read it in her happy eyes, and know it by the loud, tremulous beating of her heart?

"Give me one kiss to assure me that you are, Gladys," he said. "There is no one coming up the path—no one will see. Look up and kiss me of your own free will, and say: 'Rupert, my husband!' I should like to hear the words on your lips."

She was so happy she could not have compiled to have saved her life, for her heart was throbbing and every nerve was tingling. Poor little soul, so supremely happy! She, who had never known a lover's kiss or caress, could almost as soon have died as to have made the first advance, even though he who had asked it was her young husband.

"Well, as you please, Gladys," he had said, turning away lightly, just a little disappointed and piqued. "Perhaps you are right."

She had looked up at him timidly from beneath her great long lashes, hoping that he would stoop down and kiss her, or—or ask her again.

(To be continued.)

## SO VERY SUITABLE.

—202—

DOROTHEA became conscious that she had swum beyond her strength, and that there was neither boat nor human creature within her range of vision.

Voices came ringing across the water from the other side of the jutting point which she had rounded and far passed, and the laughing tones smote dimly and mockingly enough on her ear in this paralyzing sense of danger.

She turned towards the beach; an abrupt rise of ground covered with scrubby bushes concealed the bathing-machines and the people on the sand—the white, white sand—which gleamed so far off to her suddenly tired eyes. She was as much alone, where mortal aid was concerned, as if the low-lying shore had been the beach of some desert island in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

She realised that, if she lost her presence of mind, she must inevitably drown; yet this very necessity for controlling herself unstrung her nerves like a sensation of actual fear.

The sea had been very calm all the morning; but within the last quarter of an hour a breeze had sprung up, and the surf began to beat with a force which she had no strength to resist. The waves buffeted and flung her about at will, and her effort to direct her course, so as to avoid their violence, only exhausted her the more.

She was an excellent swimmer, and versed in all the art of husbanding her power. She ceased her fatiguing strokes, turned on her back, and allowed herself to float passively; but, in a few instants, she perceived that the undercurrent was bearing her swiftly out to sea.

She resolutely checked the wild impulse to shriek; with equal resolution held her body supine to the mercy of the water till she might get back energy enough for resistance. The force of will required was terrible, exhausting her more at first than physical fatigue had done; but she succeeded.

Suddenly she heard a voice call, loud and clear,—

"Lie quite still; I shall reach you presently."

Then she heard the rapid dip of oars; but they came from behind, and the quick sense of safety left her so utterly without strength that she could not lift her head; her eyes closed—she floated slowly on, on.

Nearer and nearer the strokes sounded; then the deep, full baritone voice called cheerfully,—

"It's all right now. Just give me your hand."

Dorothea Vernon glanced about; the boat was quite close. She saw a gentleman leaning over the side, and knew that she tried to obey his command. But the stiff drenched wildly, and she, so far from being able to second his effort to aid her, felt herself growing fainter and fainter.

She realised that she was seized in a strong grasp and lifted into the boat; then, for a little, partial insensibility locked her faculties, during which, though she could neither stir nor speak, she felt some woollen garment folded about her, while her head was carefully raised and supported; and then a strong whiff of ammonia stung her senses into renewed action.

Presently she could open her eyes and sit up; a face she had never seen was gazing into her own; but kindly and handsome as it looked, the returning ability to think and comprehend the mixture of the ridiculous which mingled with the situation, now the danger was over, made her almost wish he had left her to her fate.

"You are better," the young man said, a smile of relief crossing the anxiety depleted on his features.

"Yes," she answered, though by scarcely more than a movement of her lips; for an odd sickness had suddenly seized her.

"Just drink this," he said, holding to her mouth a little pocket-cup half-filled with sherry. She drank the wine, and soon felt relieved and strengthened.

"I'll make you a place in the stern," he continued. And, in another moment, she was half-carried and placed comfortably against a pile of rugs and shawls.

"Thanks," she said, remembering that she had not yet uttered a single expression of gratitude; "thank you so much!"

"But, if I let you drift out to sea, after all, you will have aight cause to," he replied, laughing a little. "I must attend to the craft now. Be quite easy; I'll soon take her in."

The boat had veered about; he swung it back with a vigorous stroke, and began to pull rapidly in to shore; but the distance was considerable, and the surf rendered the rowing hard enough to consume nearly a quarter of an hour.

Dorothea drew the long ulster in which she was wrapped close about her, leaning back against the rugs, and neither spoke till the keel grated on the sand.

He helped her out, opened a camp-stool which had been lying at the bottom of the boat, and made her sit down, saying—

"You must still rest a little."

"I can't attempt to thank you," she answered, shivering slightly.

"I wish you would try a few more drops of sherry instead," he rejoined. "And I've the ammonia here, if you feel at all faint."

"No, no; I don't need either. I assure you," she said, trying to smile. "I am quite right again."

"Well, now, let me propose something. We will go in the boat round the point, and land there. I know a short cut that will bring you out at the back of the bathing-houses, and so you can get in, dress comfortably, and nobody be the wiser."

He perceived that she was one of the rare human beings who dread the quiet of an adventure, and admired her therefore. Presently they got into the boat again, and Max Hayward rowed swiftly to the landing he had mentioned. Scarcely a word had been exchanged between the pair; his delicate intuition warned him that this nervous, sensitive-looking girl—perhaps never more beautiful than now, in her pallor and deshabille—would thank him most for leaving her in peace with her thoughts.

"I know where I am," she said, when he helped her on shore; "it is only a walk of a few minutes."

"I am doctor," he rejoined, as calmly as if he had been fifty instead of twenty-eight, "and you must permit me to decide. I shall just walk with you to the turn near the houses."

She did not dispute the quiet authority of his tone, and they passed on, side by side, the ulster completely covering Dorothea, so that she had not the consciousness of looking absurd; still, the situation came sufficiently near that to be annoying.

Five minutes, during which both kept silence, brought them to the top of the little sandy ascent, at the foot of which the back of the bathing-machines stretched in an ugly row.

Just then they heard voices, and Max said, quickly, in response to an annoyed expression on the young lady's face—

"There are people coming; I'm sure you'd rather meet them alone, so I'll vanish."

And vanish he did, before she had even space to utter a grateful word, an omission which she recollected in a second, with considerable remorse; besides feeling ashamed that her dislike to having her adventure known had prevented her wishing him seen. Alone, on this path, anybody she encountered might suppose that she had chosen the north beach for her swimming-exercise, and was simply returning by the nearest route.

In another instant Dorothea recognised the voices as those of Arnet Lyle and his servant. Mr. Lyle was reproving the servant in an exasperating fashion, in which nobody ever ought to address an inferior, doomed to return respectful answers, and Arnet Lyle was Miss Vernon's betrothed husband.

The two men emerged from the nearest of the sheds, as Dorothea was descending the path. Mr. Lyle abruptly dismissed his domestic, having caught sight of the lady, and hurried forward to meet her. Meanwhile, Max Hayward had paused behind the friendly shelter of a sand-hill, for the pleasure of having another glance at the beautiful woman.

"Dorothea!" exclaimed Mr. Lyle, an extremely decorous and rigid-looking man of thirty, though at the same time rather handsome, and even stylish. "Is it possible? I have been hunting for you everywhere. I went to the cottage, and your mother said you were at the beach, but I could not find you—nobody had seen you for a couple of hours. Way—"

He stopped short, and stared at her; in an effort to arrange the ulster she had let it fall open, displaying her wet bathing-dress.

"Pray don't look so horrified," said she, quietly; "I have not been out for a promenade in this costume."

"Really, dear Dorothea, you say and do the most eccentric things," he rejoined, with an insufferably patronising air of patience.

"So you have often told me lately," she said.

"Well, this morning, I went swimming by myself. I must beg you not to alarm mamma. I overtaxed my strength, and a gentleman kindly took me into his boat—he lent me this ulster."

"Great heavens!" groaned Mr. Lyle. "A stranger! What predicaments you place yourself in, Dorothea!"

"At least I am not drowned," said she, in the same quiet tone.

"No, of course, there's no talk of that; but the idea of swimming so far that you were obliged to let a stranger assist you, and—and lend you his ulster," concluded Mr. Lyle, as if that put the crowning point to her misdeed.

From where he stood Max Hayward could see both their faces, and hear every word they spoke; yet he could not move, as the risk of being perceived she instant he deserted his opportune shelter, and that would be more annoying to the lady, he felt certain.

Dorothea stood still, looking at her betrothed with an odd smile, as he fumed and fretted.

"To swim till you were so tired you had to get into a stranger's boat and accept an ulster—oh, Dorothea! Well, let that go. I wanted to tell you I have received a telegram calling me to town."

"You rather expected to," Dorothea said.

"Yes. Well, I must start by the afternoon train," he answered. "Now, before I go, there are so many things for me to arrange."

"My dress the first," she interrupted. "If you do not object I will go on, as I begin to feel a little chilly in these wet things."

The pair walked forward, and Max Hayward stood staring after them.

"What a glorious creature!" he thought. "So that is Miss Vernon, and engaged to Arnet Lyle!—Ugh!—that stiff bundle of propriety! Upon my word, I'm sorry for her—why, if she were of my mind at least, she'd have thought

drowning a preferable fate to marrying that wooden image of a man!"

He lighted a cigar and strolled away, and the engagement he had been animadverting upon reminded him of his own to his cousin, Laura Trent, to whom he was engaged, and who was almost as rigid and correct as Arnet Lyle, thought Max, but softened the verdict by adding—

"No; that's a shame, to compare her to him! She's full of prejudice and bound down to routine, but at least she has a heart."

Max's reflections having drawn me into a statement of his affairs, I may as well, at this point, make clear everything in regard to Dorothea Vernon.

She was nearly two-and-twenty, and, I think, an unusually clever woman, though with an odd distrust of her own powers and a certain humility arising therefrom, which one would scarcely have expected in a girl of her beauty and seemingly somewhat proud manner. She was an only child, and her parents, now quite elderly, adored her, though they had not much more in common than there would be between a pair of quiet old doves that had, by accident, hatched out an eagle's egg. They were both invalids, and rather selfishly occupied by their ailments, as people insensibly grow to be, and were a good deal ruled—as was Dorothea herself—by a bustling managing half-sister of Mr. Vernon's, who, being a childless widow with a large fortune, had plenty of leisure to devote to their concerns.

It was she who had directed Dorothea's schooling; taken her abroad for a year; presented her in society; and finally, during the past spring, in London, brought about the engagement between her niece and Arnet Lyle. That gentleman had known Mrs. Merrick ever since his boyhood, and, though he firmly believed that no human being could ever influence his decisions, she frequently managed him as successfully as she did most of her friends and relations.

It was time he married! Dorothea was handsome, her property good; where could he find a more fitting mate? These considerations gradually grew on him, thanks to Mrs. Merrick's counsel, and he fancied himself in love—probably was as much so as his nature could admit.

He offered himself, and Dorothea accepted him; partly because he seemed so much in earnest she could not bear to give the pain of a refusal; partly because her aunt—and therefore her parents—was urgent that she should; and a little because—since she liked no other man, and his stately attention was agreeable to her shyness—she concluded that she must be fond of him.

But, during the months which had elapsed Dorothea lived more, in many ways, than she had done in all her previous life; and, in these last six weeks spent at a quiet watering-place on the South coast, that new habit of introspection and keen observation had rapidly increased.

Soon after the beginning of their engagement, Lyle's autocratic temper and quiet obstinate persistency made themselves apparent, and, since he had come down to join them, appeared in their full vigour.

He started on his journey that evening, and the next morning Dorothea arose with an unwonted sense of freedom, though she would have been shocked had she let herself admit the fact.

Up to the last moment Lyle had leaved and laid down rules for her behaviour, and gone back over the subject of her naughty conduct in swimming too far and having to be put in a stranger's boat and wrapped in his ulster. Mr. Lyle never could make an end of any matter, however trivial; he nagged rather than scolded, and, to my mind, a fiendish murderer would be a preferable companion to the man or woman who does that.

Dorothea passed a quiet day; a letter came from her aunt, saying that still she must defer her visit which had already been so much delayed; this, with a walk and a call from pretty Mrs. Anneton interspersed with intervals of setting her mother's basket-work to rights and reading to her father, made up his tale of hours.

The next was spent in a very similar routine; but, in the evening, she went to a dance at the



hotel, under Mrs. Anneston's chaperonage, which she had promised to accept.

She attracted a great deal of attention, as she always did; but she was not devoted to dancing, and, as a rule, young men, even while admiring, did not get on with her overwell in conversation.

She was standing near old Mrs. Thomas, waiting for her chaperone to finish a frantic gallop in which Dorothea herself had declined several partners, and had somehow fallen into a reverie so deep that she quite started when Mrs. Anneston touched her arm and whispered gaily,—

"Come back to reality, enchanted princess. I want to introduce you to one of my prime favourites."

Then she added, aloud,—

"Miss Vernon, let me present my chief enemy—the most unalliant man in the world—Mr. Max Hayward."

Dorothea had started a little at being so suddenly addressed. She looked up, and in the gentleman bowing before her recognized the stranger to whom she owed, perhaps her life.

"It is fearfully embarrassing, Miss Vernon, to have one's character taken away in this fashion," said Max, not looking at all embarrassed.

"Nonsense!" cried Mrs. Anneston. "You'd be very thankful to lose your character. Anyway you needn't mind—Miss Vernon will like you all the better for the qualities I condemn. Dorothea, he'll not bore you to dance, because he hates it from sheer laziness. Oh, here comes my partner. I'll find you in the tea-room presently."

Away she floated, on the arm of her cavalier, and left the two young people standing alone, a little outside the crowd, near an open window which looked on the sea. After a chat they danced and enjoyed themselves as any other youthful pair would have done.

Max called the next morning, and Dorothea managed to express her thanks, and to do it in a fashion with which she felt tolerably satisfied, before her father and mother appeared. Just as Max was ready to leave Mrs. Anneston rushed in—as usual, in frantic haste, and crying,—

"Oh, Dorothea, we are going to Fog Hill for a picnic—just a little lot of my special friends. Do hurry! Oh, is that you, Mr. Max? Well, I have sent three different people in search of you; so now resign yourself, for you are caught, and can't escape!"

That impromptu expedition—the most delightful, Max thought, that he had ever taken part in, or ever could—proved the beginning of several entire weeks of intimate intercourse between him and Dorothea.

They had immensely grown great friends; and, besides the fact of the somewhat romantic manner in which their acquaintance had begun, her knowledge that, like herself, he was engaged, rendered Dorothea perfectly at ease. So she was not startled to perceive how thoroughly they had learned to know each other.

A year of ordinary meeting in society could not have given them such opportunity for forming a real acquaintance—that is, one which included a thorough comprehension of each other's taste and character.

Mr. Lyle's business detained him longer than he supposed it would, and, after that, the illness of his sister called him to the North; so that, altogether, six weeks elapsed before Dorothea received a letter announcing that he might be expected in a couple of days.

The news came on a Tuesday. Towards sunset Mrs. Anneston strolled in, accompanied by Max.

"Dorothea!" she cried. "Now that our trip on donkeys to Broom Corner is fixed for to-morrow—I can't put it off, even for Mr. Lyle."

"Very well," Dorothea said, quite collected; "you know Mr. Lyle does not care much for such expeditions."

The next day the donkey expedition came off with great success—as Mrs. Anneston's projects always did—undisturbed as the mode of locomotion was. The decrees had gone forth that everybody under forty-five, male or female, must

ride a donkey to the place where the picnic-luncheon was arranged; those over that age were at liberty to go in the carriages which the hostess supplied. As a matter of course, unless hindered by utter physical inability, most people—especially the men—chose the donkeys.

If Dorothea had stopped to think she might have wondered what ailed her during the gaiety of that day. She was like an escaped prisoner, who knew he must be recaptured on the following morning, but meant to enjoy these last hours of liberty to the full.

Be you sure she admitted nothing of this sort to herself. If she had caught the most distant hint of the true state of her mind, she would have gone straight home, in spite of everybody, and sat, metaphorically, in sackcloth and ashes, until the arrival of the next day and her future husband should enable her to offer ample confession.

But, if she had been so minded, she would not have needed to wait. In the middle of the joyous luncheon, while Dorothea was eating cold chicken and drinking claret-cup—Max Hayward seated beside her, their backs against the same tree, and they in consequence brought so close together that their elbows touched; while Dorothea's laugh was ringing out with that new joyousness which it had caught during the past weeks—the whole group was roused by the rattle of wheels.

"It must be old Mrs. Wallisford!" exclaimed Mrs. Anneston. "The poor soul was so bad with the gout—she calls it neuralgia—that she declined coming. But I suppose at the last moment she could not resist the thought of all the eatables."

And, while people were trying to suppress their laughter, round the base of the hill appeared Arnot Lyle, almost as gloomy and forbidding as the skeleton knight of the legend, who came to trouble the peace of a false young woman in the olden time.

"You blessed creature—I am so glad to see you!" cried Mrs. Anneston, rushing forward to meet him, and shaking his hands with unfashionable fervour. She was equal to the occasion; Dorothea and Max should have time to recover from the shock. As for herself, she enjoyed tormenting her sworn foe, and kept him full five minutes, interrupting his explanation that, having arrived unexpectedly, he had ventured to follow them, before he could finish a single sentence.

"Of course I'd never have forgiven you!" cried the widow, and, when he tried to get past, she detained him, and he was forced to undergo the gauntlet of several introductions, besides being obliged to greet people he knew before he could reach Dorothea.

Neither she nor Max had stirred; at first, she was too much startled to do so, and Max had no inclination. When Mr. Lyle at length succeeded in approaching her, she rose, held out her hand, and welcomed him pleasantly, without confusion.

"I am so sorry I was away," she observed; "but you said to-morrow. After all, you are the gainer, Mr. Lyle. This is the last of our pleasant expeditions, for almost everybody leaves shortly."

"I was very much surprised," began Mr. Lyle, then changed his phrase: "I thought I might venture to come—"

"Yes, indeed!" interrupted Mrs. Anneston, coming up opportunely; "if you had dared to slight my feast! You know Mr. Hayward, I think—oh, to be sure."

"I have met Mr. Hayward," said Lyle, stiffly, as he bowed like a man who had only one joint in his body.

"I am very glad to renew our acquaintance, Mr. Lyle," said Max, easy and tranquil, and then the two shook hands.

But, try as people might, the gayest of the party was gone, and Mrs. Anneston gave the signal for return a full hour before she had intended.

Dorothea perceived that she was in disgrace—sorry at her lover's displeasure, but unable to feel that she had done wrong. She submitted to driving back with him, as seemed a natural enough thing for her to do, but she was not prepared for the storm which burst upon her as soon as the carriage had started.

Still, she bore patiently his irate strictures against the impropriety of the donkey-expedition—bore a great many other hard speeches besides; but her submission only rendered Mr. Lyle more imperious. Then she began, not to defend herself, but to express her opinion.

"I cannot allow you," she said, "to call any action of mine improper—and I will not!"

"What do you call your conduct during these weeks?" cried he, growing livid in his effort to restrain his anger. "Do you know why I hurried back—"

"I was not aware that you had hurried," interrupted Dorothea, not meaning to be sarcastic, but just stating a fact.

"How could I help it!" he exclaimed.

"Why, everybody is talking about you and that dandy of a Max Hayward!"

"Nobody has talked of us," said Dorothea, "and Mr. Hayward is a clever, accomplished man."

"Not talking of you?" retorted Lyle. "Why, Miss Trent has been written to. She sent for me because she was so shocked and indignant at the report of your intimacy!"

"Precisely because we were both engaged, and to people who so greatly admired each other, I felt that we might be on the most friendly terms," Dorothea said, still eager to clear up any misunderstanding.

But the more she seemed in his eyes to try to palliate her conduct the more arrogant he waxed; and, by the time they reached the cottage, he had gone so far that Dorothea's spirit was fully roused. That once done, she was not easily subdued.

"I have borne enough," she said; "Mr. Lyle, you have never been satisfied with me; you have at least shown plainly that I can never content you—it will be better that our engagement should end."

Of course, like any man of that temperament, the moment he was thus met Mr. Lyle realized what he was losing, and could not endure the thought.

But Dorothea held firm; and, beyond certain conditions, no influence or argument could persuade her.

"I will take three months to decide," she said, "and Mr. Lyle shall have the same privilege." She saw him grow rigid at the word, but merely repeated: "The same privilege. If, at the end of that time, I feel that I can consent to a continuance of our engagement, I will let him know. Till then I focus on being left in peace."

An opportune and pressing invitation reached her the next day to visit a dear friend at Bath; and she set out at once, easy in regard to her parents, because Aunt Merrick proposed to remain until the season ended.

In spite of all that she had to trouble her, Dorothea spent two pleasant months with her old schoolmate; but time only confirmed the resolution which had been forming in her mind when she left the seaside. She could not marry Mr. Lyle, and she was only waiting for the expiration of the term she had herself set, in order to write and tell him so. There had been no correspondence between them—she had insisted on that—and she only heard of his whereabouts or doing from bits of information given by her aunt in that worthy lady's epistles of mingled adoration and reproach.

A short time before she was to leave Bath, however, she did receive a letter from Mr. Lyle, in which, after much circumlocution, he said,—

"You have convinced me that I was mistaken in supposing that I could make your happiness, and I accept your verdict."

Dorothea did not in the least mind this species of jilting; and though the last weeks had taught her that she probably could not be a very happy woman, at least a solitary life, in which she might as well indulge the retrospect of that little summer episode, whose importance she had learned fully to realize, was far preferable to becoming the wife of Arnot Lyle.

And only the next evening, at an amateur-theatrical representation, she saw Max Hayward. He was seated in the stalls; but, though quite near, could not get close to her. Just behind her sat two ladies, one of whom said to the other,—

"There's Max Hayward. When did he come? Do you know, his cousin has broken off her engagement with him. You remember her—that Laurent Trent we saw in the North?"

During an intermission, there was a movement in the crowd, and Dorothea found Max beside her, holding out his hand.

"I heard what that woman said," he half-whispered, "and it is quite true. You needn't console with me, though."

There was no opportunity for conversation; but he asked permission to call the next day. However, the pair met before the hour for visits; each had taken a fancy to go to the Park.

"Oh, let's go down that pretty path!" Max said. "I see a seat. We can sit there in peace."

If Dorothea had glanced at him she would have seen an odd smile on his face; but she was preoccupied by thinking about a letter she had received that morning from Mr. Lyle to inform her of his approaching marriage. She glanced up at Max, he was still looking at her with that peculiar smile.

"Did you know—Had you heard—" she began, and stopped.

"I fancy I understand," said he. "My cousin Laura is engaged to Mr. Lyle. No two persons were ever better matched, and—and I hope you congratulate them as heartily as I do."

The pair sat there in the quiet garden for a long while; and, as they rose to go, the world in that time having grown wondrously bright to their eyes, Max said, laughingly,—

"After all, we were both jilted—you can't deny that—so I suppose everybody will admit our right to console each other."

PEKING is advancing. So at least one gathers from the *Peking* and *Tientsin Times*, which announce that a couple of gas lamps and three petroleum lamps now illuminate the capital of the celestial kingdom. This unwonted departure, however, is not due to native enterprise. The gas lights are set up in front of the Russian embassy, while the three lesser luminaries shine for the benefit to the customers of the Russo-Chinese bank. Throughout the rest of the city wayfarers still have to follow their noses as soon as darkness sets in.

THERE are spots in the ocean where the water is 5 miles deep. If it is true that the pressure of the water on any body in the water is one pound to the square inch for every 2 feet of the depth, anything at the bottom of one of the "5-mile holes" would have a pressure about it of 18 200 feet to every square inch. There is nothing of human manufacture that would resist such a pressure. That it exists there is no doubt. It is known that the pressure on a well-corked glass bottle at the depth of 360 feet is so great that the water will force its way through the pores of the glass. It is also said that pieces of wood have been weighted and sunk in the sea to such a depth that the timbers have become so condensed that the wood has lost its buoyancy and would never float again. It could not be even made to burn when dry.

MANILA is a beautiful city, about the size of San Francisco. It is built on both sides of the river *Pagay*, which is navigable to its source. Old Manila lies on the left bank. Parts of the masonic stone wall which was built around it three hundred years ago are still visible, and some of the gates survive, through which a stream of solemn friars, grinning Chinese, resplendent Spanish officials, beggars in rags, pious nuns, handsome *scholas*, gay native girls, mothers in uniform, natives in breech-clouts, four-horse carriages, two-wheel pony wagons and creaking buffalo carts, pour from morning till night. The cathedral, monasteries, and Government offices are in old Manila; the business quarter, the foreign shipping houses, the banks, stores and custom-house, are in Binondo, on the other side of the river. Between the walls and the shore is the *Laneta*, the fashionable promenade, where the band plays and society enjoys the evening breeze, flirts under hundreds of electric lights, and drives around the circle in

carriages, which follow each other in a slow, dignified procession.

On the Holland coast great dikes are built by the action of the wind. The sand becomes dry and drifts in lines and eddies. The inhabitants took advantage of this fact, and, observing that little mounds were formed wherever there was an obstruction, they scooped holes in the sand and placed therein tufts of grass. These became more substantial when they took root and began to grow, and very soon the sand was blown up against them, finally covering them completely. The entire surface of the beach was set out with plantations of these tufts, and behind them were rows of reeds also set in the sand. The reeds appear to stop the course of the sand-drifts, the windrows piling up about a foot high around the reed-stalks. When this additional height was gained the process of putting out grass tufts was again begun and continued until the entire surface was like a garden. Then the drifting of sand was allowed to proceed. This process was repeated again and again until enormous dikes were formed. In heavy storms the dikes are to an extent washed into holes and gullies, but they are repaired by the same process as soon as the wind sets the sand drifting again.

THE life of a mandarin is necessarily an inactive one. Under no circumstances is he ever seen on foot in his own jurisdiction. Occasionally a popular figure will try to earn a reputation by going out incognito at night; but even then he takes a strong guard with him, and gets his head broken if he tries too closely into abuses. As the police and the thieves are usually co-partners in one concern, it naturally follows that caution must be used in attacking gaming houses which have bribed themselves into quasi-legality. A mandarin's leisure, which may be said to begin at five P.M. and continue until nine, is spent in one or the other of the following ways. Either he reads poetry by himself or he sends for his secretaries to drink wine, crack melon-seeds and compose poetry with him; or he may shoot off a few arrows at a target in his garden, or (and this is commonest) he may invite the rich merchants to a "feed" in his yamens, or accept invitations from them. On his grandmother's, mother's and wife's birthday the mandarin receives congratulations and presents—of course, on his own, too. On these festive occasions he may give a play. In China theatrical entertainments are commonly hired privately, though as often as not the "man in the street" is admitted gratis.

A GERMAN idea, known as the "marriage school," neatly combines physical and mental culture, and gives equal instruction in practical housekeeping and the duties of a hostess. Girls are admitted after they have completed their ordinary education, and the principal instruction is in housekeeping, although, of course, cultivation of the mind is not by any means neglected. At the commencement of the school term the mistress selects four of the girls, whom she expects to take entire charge of the house for a week—two servants, a cook and a housemaid, being regularly employed to do the rough work. These embryo housekeepers have to rise very early in the morning and see that the servants get through with their duties. The girls have to prepare the breakfast with their own hands, and afterwards visit every room in the house to see that it has been put in perfect order. Under the supervision of the mistress they have to cook the dinner, attend to the afternoon tea, and later on prepare the supper. Their duties for the day cease by another inspection of the house to see that everything is secure for the night. The following week another quartette of girls is chosen; they perform the same duties. The next week another quartette is chosen, and so on. Two or three times a week guests are invited to dine, and the girls in turn act as hostesses. They take the head of the table, carve the joints, and set the ball of conversation rolling. By way of recreation there are musical evenings, dances, and walks, and bicycling parties.

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READER.**



## FACETIÆ.

CRITIC: "Where did you get the idea for that picture?" Painter: "Out of my head." Critic: "You must be glad that it is out!"

HELEN: "Young Softleigh proposed to me last night. He ought to have known beforehand that I should refuse him." Her Dearest Friend: "I'm sure he did, dear!"

AME: "General, an overpowering force of the enemy, on bikes, has attacked our left." General: "Sound the retreat! And order the tack brigade to protect our rear."

COLLEGE PROFESSOR: "Your father is a wealthy farmer, I understand. He conducts his farm on scientific principles, I presume?" Student: "No, he runs it to make money!"

MR. GASWELL (in an art store): "Seems to me that's an awful price to pay for an old picture like that." Mrs. Gaswell: "The picture is rather old, to be sure, but the frame is new."

MIRIAM: "Did you take the picture of the young man on the mantel?" Mildred: "Yes." Miriam: "Friend of yours, I suppose?" Mildred: "Well, he was before I took the picture."

MOTHER: "Johnny, stop using such dreadful language!" Johnny: "Well, mother, Shakespeare uses it." Mother: "Then don't play with him; he's no fit companion for you."

YOUNG DOCTOR: "I'm doing very well. I was called up three nights last week." Old Doctor: "That's good! I hope you never forget to appear annoyed on such occasions?"

"So you were at Mrs. Brown's dinner yesterday! What sort of a menu did they give you?" "I really can't tell you, for I didn't take any. It's a thing I very seldom touch."

SAYBEE: "Do you think that waste makes want?" Gayboy: "Sure, Mike; the very sight of my sweetheart's waist makes me want to put my arms around it."

CHOLLIE: "Don't you think it was bad fawn in you last night to drink too much wine?" Rounders: "Didn't think about form then, but I must admit the bad taste of it now."

CREDITOR: "Now, I'll ask you for the last time when you intend to pay me?" Debtor: "Well, thank Heaven, there's going to be an end to that stupid question."

OLD RICHLI: "I don't wish you for a son-in-law, sir." Young man: "No! You haven't any other good position you could give a fellow, have you?"

CALLER: "Isn't that new neighbour of yours rather eccentric?" Mrs. Honeybun: "No; he isn't rich enough to be called eccentric. He's just a plain crank."

BILLIE: "Herbert has been going out with me these three months now. Do you not think it is time he proposed?" Rival: "Oh, no; it was nearly six months before he proposed to me."

"I THOUGHT you expected to go away this summer for your health?" "I had planned to do so; but our family physician has gone for his, so it won't be necessary."

HE: "Stunning hair that girl over there has! I should think when she undoes it it would fall below her waist." She (jealous): "Yes, on to the floor."

"No, Mr. Coolhand," she said, kindly. "I am sure I could never learn to love you." "Oh, perhaps you could," rejoined Coolhand, cheerfully. "Never too old to learn, you know."

"I DIDN'T realise how small Boudierby was until I heard what Cadaby said about him." "What was that?" "He said he was every inch a gentleman."

DR. STYLL: "Ah, Miss Filt! and have you given up your Sunday-school class?" Miss Filt: "Yes, indeed; I had to. The boys got to be such big fellows, and asked such embarrassing questions. One of them asked me to marry him!"

"I am afraid that actors sometimes deceive us about the salaries they get," remarked the mild-mannered civilian. "No," replied the keen observer, "they may think they do, but they don't."

REELMAN (to guest): "Oh, I assure you that I never make a business of fishing; I merely fish for recreation." Mrs. Reelman: "Yes, and that's about the only thing I ever knew him to catch."

The following burst of eloquence occurred in the speech of an impassioned orator from the Isle of Erin: "But, ha! I smell a rat! I hear the rustle of its wings. I see it brewing on the horizon, but I will nip it in the bud!"

THAT was a triumphant appeal of an Irishman, who was a lover of antiquity, who, in arguing the superiority of old architecture over the new, said, "Where will you find any modern building that has lasted so long as the ancient!"

ANXIOUS MOTHER: "I am afraid Johnny is unwell." Father: "My goodness! What does he complain of?" Anxious Mother: "He hasn't begun to complain yet; but I forgot to lock the jam cupboard to-day, and there isn't a bit missing."

DAUGHTER (after the theatre): "That play was so interesting I couldn't do a thing but just sit and listen to it." Fashionable Mother: "It was abominable, the way you watched that play. People must have thought we were from the country."

"WHEN I think of the wrongs our country has suffered," said the orator who knew he was too old to enlist, "my bosom swells with indignation!" "Oh, is that it?" squeaked the man who didn't like him. "I thought it was your shirt wasn't a fit."

SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER: "Why, Potey Murphy! Fighting again! Did not last Sunday's lesson teach you when you are struck on one cheek to turn the other to the striker?" Potey Murphy: "Yes'm; but he belted me on de nose, an' I only got one."

A CERTAIN naval captain, a few years ago, received a young cadet, on his first joining, with the remark: "Well, youngster, the old story, I suppose—the fool of the family sent to sea!" The youngster replied: "Oh, no, sir. That's all been altered since your day."

O'HARA: "She was a good wife to me, poor woman. Many's the word of good advice she gave to me." Geobegan: "Thurs for yer, an' many's the time O've heard her advicin' y'r when O' lived in the house beyant—a mile up the road, bedad!"

"You had fine luck to-day, Sam," said the fisherman's wife as he came in. "The worst luck I ever had," was the sullen reply. "Why, Sam, look at the great string of fish!" "That's just it. There wasn't a chap with a rod on the pier that I could sell 'em to."

MRS. MISHAW: "You praise yourself too much, my dear. People would appreciate you more, and would tell you so, if you were to cultivate a little modest reticence." Mr. Mishaw: "That's where you are mistaken. I did that for years, and nobody took any notice of me but you."

A. (who has been inveigled into going shopping with his wife): "This stuff will make you a nice dress." Mrs. A.: "Oh, nobody is wearing that now." A.: "Then how will this suit?" Mrs. A.: "Oh, that won't do at all. Everybody's got something like that."

HE found his hair was leaving him at the top of his head, and took his barber to task about it. "You sold me two bottles of stuff to make the hair grow," he said. "It is very strange it won't grow again," interrupted the barber. "I can't understand it!" "Well, look here," said the man; "I don't mind drinking another bottle, but this must be the last!"

"THAT clerk always comes to the office on holidays," said one member of the firm. "Yes," replied the man who has no genial impulses, "he is so much in the habit of loafing here that he doesn't feel comfortable anywhere else."

A SAILOR, in describing his first efforts to become a waterman, said, that just at the close of a dark night he was sent aloft to see if he could see a light. After a short time he was hailed from the deck with: "Masthead, ahoy!" "Ay, ay, sir," was the answer. "Do you see a light?" "Yes, sir." "What light?" "Daylight, sir." The look-out was ordered down with a run.

MRS. GREATHEAD: "What kept you so late at that meeting?" Mr. Greathead: "I had to draw up a long set of resolutions for publication, complimenting Mr. Bullhead's great efficiency as a member of the board, and expressing our heartfelt regret at losing his invaluable aid and counsel." "Of all things! Why, you and the rest have been fighting for three months to get him out of the board." "Yes; but to-night he resigned voluntarily."

"I THINK we really ought to give our attention to making things that will be of value to the boys at the front," said the one in pink. The one in blue laughed scornfully. "Has that just occurred to you?" she asked. "I began on something for Charlie the very day he left with the troops." "Oh, do tell me what it was!" exclaimed the one in pink. "An embroidered sofa pillow," answered the one in blue, proudly. "He always used to say that there was nothing so comfortable for a tired man as a real good sofa pillow and a hammock!"

A RICE Glaswegian, while shooting over his estate in Perth, treated an attendant gillie to a glass of whiskey. The servant—a true son of the Highlands—assumed an air of unmistakable disappointment at the unwelcome smallness of the glass. Thinking to divert the man's attention from his critical examination, the donor jointly remarked: "I say, Mac, do you happen to know how glasses like the one you hold in your hand are made?" "Nae, maister, I dinna ken ony thing about the maitter," was the answer. "I wonder you haven't heard that they are blown," rejoined the gentleman. "Aweel," replied Mac, looking judiciously up at the glass, "he mair sure has been maiter awful short o' breath that blowed this one!"

A TEXAS military company was out on the range recently practising at rifle shooting. The lieutenant in command suddenly became exasperated at the poor shooting, and seizing a gun from one of the privates, cried sharply: "I'll show you fellows how to shoot!" Taking a long aim, and a strong aim, and an aim altogether, he fired and missed. Coolly turning to the private who owned the gun, he said: "That's the way you shoot!" He again loaded the weapon, and missed. Turning to the second man in the ranks, he said: "That's the way you shoot." In this way he missed about a dozen times, illustrating to each soldier his personal incapacity, and finally he accidentally hit the target. "And that," he ejaculated, handing the gun back to the private, "is the way I shoot!"

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## SOCIETY.

THE Empress Frederick is to stay at Balmoral for a month, after which she will pay a visit to the Prince of Wales at Sandringham. The Empress intends to spend most of the winter in Italy and Greece.

THERE are now six hundred electric lamps in use at Balmoral, and this means of illumination is not only far more cheery and bright but also very much cooler than gas. The greater coolness of the illuminants is that which has recommended it to the Queen. Her Majesty very much dislikes heated rooms.

WINDSOR CASTLE has been full of workmen for several weeks. Several of the private apartments have been decorated, including some of the rooms in the Queen's own suite in the Victoria Tower. Some of the State apartments have also been thoroughly renovated. Many of the designs were selected by Princess Beatrice, and these are exceedingly elaborate and artistic.

THE Duke of York has quite a little collection of comic baby pictures. He is always immensely amused with any funny sketches of tiny folk. He also takes a great interest in quaint mechanical toys, and he is not infrequently to be seen when he is in town peering into toy-shop windows in search of some ludicrous automatic novelty for Prince Eddy.

THE Duke and Duchess of Connaught will stay with the Queen for a fortnight, when they are to come south to Buckingham Palace, and on Friday, October 28th, the Duke will pay a visit to Lewis as Provincial Grand Master of the Sussex Freemasons. The Duke and Duchess will go to Germany in the following week, and they intend to stay for some time at Dresden, and will ultimately proceed to Cairo, proposing to return to England late in the spring through Italy, halting at Naples, Rome, and Florence.

THE Duke and Duchess of Cumberland will probably come to England in November to pay visits to the Queen at Windsor Castle and to the Prince and Princess of Wales at Sandringham. The Duke of Cumberland has not been in England since he attended the funeral of his father, King George of Hanover, at Windsor Castle in June 1878; and the last visit of the Duchess to this country took place in the late autumn of 1875, long before her marriage, when she accompanied the King and Queen of Denmark to England.

THE Queen will remain at Balmoral until Friday, November 18th, when her Majesty will journey south to Windsor Castle. The presentation of State Colours to the Scots Guards by the Queen will take place in the quadrangle of Windsor Castle about the middle of December, before the Court leaves for Osborne, and after the return of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught from the Continent. The Duke of Connaught is Colonel-in-Chief of the Scots Guards.

It is not generally known that at Osborne there is a garden cottage, in the shape of a pagoda, where none may enter except her Majesty. This cottage holds nothing but mementoes of the late Prince Consort and relics of the Queen's youth, as well as the toys and games of all her children, many of which Prince Consort made himself, for he was no mean carpenter. There are also here wonderful fishes caught by the Duke of Coburg in Canadian seas; birds, tigers, shot by the Prince of Wales while in India; a mummy case brought from Egypt, and other precious curiosities that are dearly prized by the Queen, who visits this family museum every day while at Osborne, and sits among the remains of her own and her children's youth. Very few know how much the Queen feels all the ties of that age being snapped year after year, as those who helped her to govern, to entertain, and to rear up her children, pass away one by one, and she has none left with whom she can talk over old times.

PRINCE LEOPOLD ON ALBERT has no chance with Prince Arthur of Connaught with the foil. The latter is also an excellent rider and a smart little swordsman. He is destined ultimately for the 6th Irish-killing Dragoons, of which corps the Duke of Connaught is Colonel-in-Chief.

## STATISTICS.

THE proportion of foreigners to English in England is about 1 in 250.

POLICE-COURT statistics show that Cornwall is the best-behaved county in England.

THE average weight of men in England is 155lb, and that of women 123lb.

AN entomologist estimates that there are 240,000 varieties of insects in the world.

A FAMOUS musician says that 50 per cent. of the Germans understand music, 16 per cent. of the French, and 2 per cent. of the English.

## GENE.

RICHES are honour only when [they are the fruit of] honesty.

A MAN that studieth revenge keepeth his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well.

A MAN can carry his mind with him as he carries his watch; but, like the watch, to keep it going he must keep it wound up.

WE should manage our fortune as we do our health—enjoy it when good, be patient when it is bad, and never apply violent remedies except in an extreme necessity.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPICED CHERRIES.—This is for serving with duck, roast fowl, etc. Stone and chew the cherries. Add sugar and vinegar and spices—cinnamon, cloves, allspice—to taste; also a little lemon-juice. Use cold.

SPINACH PUDDING.—Take six tablespoonfuls of cooked spinach, add the same quantity of breadcrumbs soaked in milk and drained, a pinch of salt and a little grated nutmeg, and four eggs well beaten up. Mix all well together, put into a buttered pudding-mould and boil for two hours. Serve with melted butter.

EASTER PUDDING.—Have ready some egg-shells from which the contents have been poured through a half-inch hole in the large end, and which have been carefully washed and drained. Set them in a dish of salt and pour in a corn-starch blanc-mange, and keep, until served, in a refrigerator or other cold place.

DELICIOUS LUNCHEON SANDWICHES.—Mince up fine any cold bottled or roasted chicken; also mince up fine some well-roasted peanuts or almonds. Trim the crusts from thin slices of bread and cut in any desired shape. Butter and then put a layer of chicken; spread a little mayonnaise dressing over it, then a layer of minced nuts. These are delicious, and make a fine dish for luncheon or tea.

SWEET POTATO RECIPES.—Six sweet potatoes medium size, boiled and mashed fine, two tablespoonfuls shortening, one teaspoonful salt, two tablespoonfuls sugar, two cups of sweet milk, two quarts of flour, three teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Mix potatoes, salt, lard, sugar and milk and beat well. Add flour and baking powder, roll out and cut. Bake twenty minutes in a quick oven and serve at once.

TASTY SALAD.—Boil a few potatoes. When they are cold, cut them into slices and put them into a salad bowl, with a few thin slices of cucumber and beetroot. Add one egg cut into slices and a few skinned young onions also cut into slices. Well wash and shake in a tea-cloth the white leaves from two or three lettuce. Do not cut up the leaves, but simply break them in half. Put them into the bowl, sprinkle over them a little salt and pepper and two or three tablespoonfuls of good salad oil. Toss the leaves about well and lightly in this, then pour in one tablespoonful of vinegar. Again lightly toss the leaves, and serve at once.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

AIR-CUSHIONS made of paper are used by the Japanese.

THE largest locomotive in the world is about to be built in America. Some idea of its size may be gathered from the fact that it will require ten drivers.

THE polar fox changes the colour of its coat. In summer it is almost black; in winter it is so white that the animal can scarcely be seen as it scampers over the snow.

THE streets in Chinese cities are higher in the centre than at the sides. The pedestrians are therefore subjected to the discomfort of wading through puddles in rainy weather, as the water lodges on the footpaths.

A FROG cannot breathe with its mouth open. Its breathing apparatus is so arranged that when its mouth is open its nostrils are closed. To suffocate a frog it is necessary to prop its jaws so that they cannot shut.

In certain parts of Africa it is considered a mark of disrespect to bury out-of-doors at all. Only slaves are treated in such unceremonious fashion. The honoured dead are buried under the floor of the house.

THE small town of Werda, in the kingdom of Dahomey, is celebrated for its temple of serpents, a long building in which the priests keep upwards of 1,000 serpents of all sizes, which they feed with birds and frogs brought to them as offerings by the natives.

In the public schools of Switzerland heat-holidays have been established by law. The well-known fact that the brain cannot work properly when the heat is excessive has been recognised there, and the children are dismissed from their tasks whenever the thermometer goes above a certain point.

BUFF is never seen at a Chinese table, oxen and cows capable of working the plough being accounted too valuable to the farmer to be consigned to the butcher. Very severe penalties are attached to the slaughter of these animals, the punishment for the first offence being a hundred strokes with a bamboo.

A MICRONE PROOF dwelling has been erected in Yokohama. The windows are immovable, set in air-tight frames; the outflow of air is by means of openings near the roof, through which no air can enter; and all the air which comes into the house must first pass through a tube, be filtered through cotton batting, and then be sterilised by passing through glycerine.

In various parts of North America there is found a kind of ant that performs all the processes connected with farming. They weed the ground near their nests, clearing away all the green stuff, except a grain-bearing grass known as "ant-rice." They sow the seeds of the grass and gather the crop when it is ripe. The chaff is removed, but the grain is stored for winter use.

THE paper teeth made in Germany—that is artificial teeth for human use, manufactured from paper pulp instead of porcelain and other materials that are usually selected for making our imitation masticators—are said to be very satisfactory. It is distinctly durable, and, not being brittle, does not chip off. The moisture of the month has no effect upon it, it retains its colour perfectly, and is lighter in weight than porcelain, and cheaper, of course, to make.

In the Philippine Islands a man must pay a license to sell coconuts from his own trees, or indigo of his own raising. Every article of furniture that costs half a sovereign is taxed. The curtain never goes up at the theatre unless two pounds is paid to the Government, and for every act of slaughtering his own animals, clipping his own sheep or felling his own trees, the Philippine farmer must pay a fee to the Government. There are exacted Government tributes for getting married and for being buried, and at every step and turn of his life the tax collector holds out his hand to him, and it is not a demand that can be refused.



NEXT WEEK WE SHALL COMMENCE THE PUBLICATION OF A SERIAL STORY, BY AN AUTHOR OF REPUTE,

ENTITLED

## THE LOST STAR.

### NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. C.—Inquire at the terminus.

RALPH.—Legal assistance should be employed.

ANGUS.—Employ a solicitor to make the demand.

A. R.—He must make up the full time of service.

PUBLISHED.—To prevent the book from slipping down.

G. V.—It is still in force, but not likely to be carried out.

HENRY.—The marriage must be stated to the clergyman.

AWY.—Nothing that you cannot get as cheap and as good at the shops.

GRACE.—Someone must personally inspect before they can tell what it needs.

ANTHONY.—Almost all articles of food are adulterated, especially the cheaper grades.

S. W.—We do not enter into such questions. Write to one of the scientific weeklies.

JACK.—You must apply for a berth on board ship to some owner or captain of a vessel.

QUINCE.—You can have him removed from any part of the face or body by electrolysis.

M. R.—The tenant is liable for the disinfecting work, the landlord for any structural alterations.

H. S.—Sickness may be prevented by the free use of disinfectants in and about your dwelling-houses.

LAURENCE.—We do not keep any record of such trifling matters, nor does any reference book give them.

CONSTANT READER.—Lads entering the Navy in such situations must not be under twelve or over fourteen.

IGNORANCE.—"R.V.F." at the foot of a letter stand for four French words, meaning "Reply if you please."

HENRY.—The best way would be to forward samples of your work to a number of periodicals intended for children.

W. L.—Every soldierman or painter has Irish or quicklime in stock for whitewashing purposes; get a pennyworth.

HOWARD.—In order to be a dentist you must serve an apprenticeship of at least four years, and pass several examinations.

V. K.—To make your boots shine, rub them with a slice of an orange. When nearly dry, briskly polish with a soft brush.

C. K.—The woman has not a Parliamentary vote, but can go to the poll in municipal, school, and county and parish council elections.

WORKING HOUSEWIFE.—New tins should be set over the fire, with boiling water in them, for several hours before food is put in them.

A. R. C.—Full information may be had on application in writing to the Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster.

DICK TURPIN.—Unless acquainted with some captain or owner, there is no chance of your procuring a berth as captain's servant on board ship.

GERALD.—Situations in banking firms are obtained through private influence with the managers or directors. The vacancies are rarely advertised in the press.

F. H.—If you are going out on speculation you would do well to leave your family at home until you have provided a home and settlement for them in the colony.

CONSTANT READER.—The wife having gone away voluntarily is not entitled to alimony, but may insist on the child she has with her being maintained by its father.

HAL.—Anything might be reduced to gambling if conducted in the gambling spirit; it is not the thing done which constitutes the fault or crime, but the way in which it is done.

LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—One lawyer is quite enough to employ, and his expenses would depend upon the trouble required to be taken, length of deeds, correspondence, &c.

Y. C.—The salaries of physicians in the navy are fixed according to their grade. They are put through severe examinations, the nature of which outsiders are not supposed to know.

RIF VAN WINKLE.—The war indemnity paid by France to Germany in 1871 amounted to five milliards of francs, or £200,000,000 sterling; the amount was transferred in gold to the conquerors, and remains now locked up intact in readiness for the cost of carrying on the war which France may thrust upon Germany.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Father must have given consent to registration of child in his name, otherwise it could not be entered if registrar was made aware the birth was illegitimate.

A. R.—Unless you be a good judge of a violin, do not attempt to purchase one without the opinion of a competent person. The prices vary according to the qualities of the instruments.

POLLIX PRICKING.—If the former employs a man to shoot rabbits, it is in place of using a gun himself; the two cannot, therefore, go out together, but the man may have one with him to carry his bag.

A. J.—All the large friendly societies insist on entrants submitting to a medical examination before they are accepted as members; the Free Gardeners, Oddfellows, and Sherpards are all good.

AMMITION.—If you think yourself qualified, try and obtain an engagement. You will have to begin at the bottom rung of the ladder, and you will have harder work to do than you are at present aware of.

SEEKER.—There is no one in Natal to whom you could write for information about one who went out to the colony fifteen years ago; but an advertisement inserted in one of their newspapers might discover the absent one.

GUY.—Thomas Guy, the founder of the hospital in St. Thomas's street, Borough, was the son of a lighterman in Southwark, and born in 1644. He amassed a large fortune by speculation, and spent £200,000 in founding the hospital that bears his name.

### THE TRYST ON THE WOODLAND LAKE.

Oh, dear delights, ye summer nights,  
When o'er the lake the shallop lights  
The calm expanse, and fireflies dance,  
And love lies back in sweetest trance,  
At shallop's stern, as words that burn,  
And sighs that breathe unuttered yearning,  
Like fettered angels shorn of wings,  
Flock out upon the gentle wave,  
And high in joy for archery  
Of God's best fans, the upper sky,  
The angels of the spheres reply  
To mortal love, and songs descend  
With these sweet matrigals to blend.  
For angels love to gaze on love  
Of earth—and even the dove  
Of God's own blessing lights and cheers  
The love that bieth through the years,  
Whereof in long-drawn vistas see  
This hour forecasts the dream to me,  
And on the lake's serene expanse  
I seem to gaze as in a trance  
On mellowing moon and nadir calm,  
Aye down the glowing, with its balm  
Of sweet oblivion to all  
Have that in memory most dear  
Love's deathless, golden carnival,  
Even in life's wintry year,  
If in last shades of taper bright,  
Her trailing splendour o'er the night;  
And past the narrow earthly bar,  
The kindly welcome of the stars,  
Stars that shall shine where these shall rest  
And angel warders o'er their breast!

JOCelyn DE BURGH.—If, instead of merely damping your hair, the head were washed twice or thrice weekly with borax in the water, then well rubbed up and brushed, the scalp might be invigorated, and the hair failure arrested.

MARIETTA.—Chop up some oysters, mix it with bread-crumbs, adding pepper and mustard, according to taste. Bind the mixture with beaten-up egg-yolk, divide into small rolls, surround each roll with a good puff paste, and fry.

PAULA.—If we were told what you wish to settle down to, we might then be in a position to say where you would find your most likely opportunity for it, but the vague question now addressed to us gives no indication of your abilities.

FRED'S TRUE LOVE.—The young person who boasts that he does not have to work shows his essential need of work & discipline him into common-sense. Is idleness or indolence anything to be proud of? Work is never dishonourable; loafing always is.

INTERESTED.—It is impossible for us to reply to your question here, because the best brains of the world might be engaged in a discussion of that topic and yet never be able to prove anything. We must refrain from discussing religion in this column.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—If your son said he was eighteen years of age when enlisted, and looked like it, the authorities will not let him go now, and after all that is perhaps fortunate; though you had him back, there could be no certainty about his remaining, and his next venture might be worse than going soldiering.

INDIGNANT READER.—Having given your personal luggage into the custody of one of the company's servants, and seen it addressed to the station to which you were journeying, you have a good claim upon the company for the full value of the goods should they not be recovered.

HARTIE.—Parties when introduced to each other by a very intimate and mutual friend, often shake hands with each other, particularly men when they are desirous of improving the acquaintance. But if presented in a formal manner to a lady thus a polite bow is sufficient.

SOLDIER'S LAMB.—Being married on the strength of the regiment you have a good many privileges, and this among them, that the husband would be secured to you in comfortable quarters and agreeable society, with protection against many dangers to which the average working man's wife is exposed.

PROUSE.—Slightly damp the ink stain, then press tartaric acid upon it, which will absorb the black, that is the iron in the ink, for which the acid has affinity; repeat until only a brown stain is left, when oxalic acid must be used, and finally iron up the paper from behind with a smoothing iron.

G. F. R.—Write a simple note explaining how you came to be there and ask him why he did not go on the excursion as he intended. Probably his presence in that street would be just as easily explained as yours in a carriage with a man who was an entire stranger to him.

FANNY.—Plums and peaches can be skinned by pouring boiling water over them, when the skins will slip off easily. Prepare only a few at a time as the heat softens them. Whenever possible, make a syrup of sugar and fruit juice, or as little water as possible, and cook the fruit in it, either for preserves or for canned fruit.

TONY.—Let us put it in a sentence—a father can by his will dispose of his whole house property as he thinks fit, giving it all to one or some of his family, or to strangers and excluding his children, as he thinks fit; "oldest son alive," or children of older son, deceased, are powerless to interfere with the father's arrangements.

EMIGRATION.—No one is turned back on attempting to land in the States if he has a reasonably substantial kit with him, and is a man in good health, evidently capable of working for his own maintenance; but persons advanced in age, with little personal luggage, are not likely to escape the cautious officers, or find a footing in the new country.

L. R. W.—Take one pound of powdered white sugar, half pound of bicarbonate of soda, and one-and-a-half drachm of essence of lemon. Mix these ingredients thoroughly, and divide them between six dozen papers. Take five ounces of tartaric acid of citric acid, and divide it between the same number of papers. To use, dissolve one of each paper in half a tumblerful of water, then mix the two.

GRACE.—One lemon, half ounce citric acid, one-and-a-half pounds sugar, three breakfast cups of water; pare the rind of the lemon very thinly and squeeze the juice out into an enamelled pan; if possible add the water and boil fifteen minutes; strain through a cloth and return to the saucepan with the sugar and citric acid, and boil five minutes; cool and bottle for use.

MIRIAM.—Cut the meat carefully from the bones, divide the pieces into dice, or, if preferred, into shreds, and season with salt and pepper, a little very best melted butter and a dash of celery seed or a little Worcestershire or Tabasco. Line a salad dish with lettuce leaves, and put in the old meat. Save the smallest leaves to garnish with. The chicken may be covered with mayonnaise if desired. Sometimes bits of celery are added, but the dish is excellent when made plain, especially for children.

THE LONDON READER can be sent to any part of the world, post-free Three-halpence Weekly; or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence. The yearly subscription for the Monthly Part, including Christmas Part, is Eight Shillings and Eightpence, post-free.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of any Bookseller.

NOTICE.—Part 418, is Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXX., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

THE INDEX to Vol. LXX. is Now Ready; Price One Penny, post-free, Three-halpence.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 24, Catherine Street, Strand, W.C.

\*. We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

## CERTAIN SILLY OLD SAYINGS.

It is high time a lot of old proverbs and sayings were shown up and exposed. We have been taken in and deceived by them long enough. For example, how many thousand times have we been told that one's young days are his best days. Allowing a margin for variation in individual cases, I flatly deny the truth of it, taken as a general statement.

The great majority of sick persons are children; most of the human race dies in childhood. And as to enjoyment, using the term in its broad sense, the pleasures of childhood are not to be compared with those of adult life. Children are not *free*; they are under discipline. They are victimised by a hundred depressing and sorrow-breeding influences from which mature persons are absolutely exempt.

Genuine happiness is inseparable from developed judgment, the knowledge that arises from experience, the mellowness of character which comes only with riper years; and, lastly, that state of habitual good health that is vastly more common among men and women of *sixty* than in childhood and youth.

To the callow, inchoate and unformed human beings called boys and girls—suffering from a perfect swarm of diseases and shut in on every side by rules and laws—I would say, Wait until you are *grown up* before you expect to taste of the really good things of this world. Childhood is a pen, a prison. Freedom comes when the intellect shall have delivered us from its vain sorrows and growth conferred physical strength.

Now these reflections arose in my mind on reading the following letter, written by a mother about her boy.

"In February of last year (1896)," she says, "my son Tom, aged thirteen years, began to sicken. He was weary, tired, and had no life or energy. Instead of playing about, he would sit and cry. He had no appetite, and after eating complained of pain at the chest and stomach.

"He got no rest at night, and soon grew so weak that with the least exertion he would faint away. The perspiration would stand like beads on his forehead, and it was alarming to see his weak state. In this condition he continued for six months, during which time a doctor attended

him, who gave him medicines that afforded temporary relief, but still he got no strength.

"In August (1896) a book was left at my house, and I read of a case like my son's having been cured by Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I bought a bottle of this medicine from Mr. Barter, High Street, and after he had taken it he began to improve.

"His appetite returned and food agreed with him. He now gained strength and got back the flesh he had lost. After giving him three bottles he was well and strong. He is now a strong, healthy boy. You can publish this statement for the benefit of others. (Signed) (Mrs.) MATILDA POWELL, 48, High Street, Twerton-on-Avon, near Bath, February 9th, 1897."

It might seem that Tom Powell, only thirteen years old then, was too young to have dyspepsia. But think a moment. One of the commonest ailments of very young children is constipation and indigestion. Some muddle-headed fathers and mothers fancy their children can stand anything and eat anything. This silly notion multiplies childish suffering and *makes long rows of short graves in the churchyards*. Much of the vitality of children is lost in their growing. They need more food because they *are* growing; and often have correspondingly less power to digest it. Sometimes from over-eating, and sometimes from under-eating, or from any of a dozen other causes, the horrors of acute dyspepsia are sprung upon the poor young things. As a rule, parents seem neither to understand nor realize this. They assume that the children will outgrow it, or get over it somehow, until they collapse altogether, and perhaps run into quick consumption.

When the ailment is indigestion, as in the case of our young friend Tom Powell, Mother Seigel's Syrup is the remedy, and the only remedy, needed. Given in the prescribed doses, it is exactly the right medicine for children. There is not a drop of anything injurious or harmful in it. I hope parents (and some doctors also, if they please) will make a note of what I have here imperfectly said, and thus render child-life among us healthier and happier than under ordinary circumstances it ever was, or is likely to be.